



FOR the author of this autobiography life has indeed been an adventure — but an adventure of the mind and spirit rather than of the type usually associated with the term. Having been extremely short-sighted almost from birth, the author as a young man was threatened with complete loss of sight, orthodox practitioners admitting their inability to prevent the possibility. But at this crucial moment of his life the author was brought into touch with the Bates' Method of Visual Re-education, and through his experiences thereby gained was enabled to write his first book *Better Sight Without Glasses* which has attained a phenomenal success, and is still a best-seller of its kind. As a consequence of his association with the Nature Cure and Diet Reform movements, arising out of his adventures in saving himself from the threat of blindness, the author has assumed a position of eminence over the years as a writer on these subjects, his books having a world-wide sale and reputation. Being by inclination a keen student of psychology, philosophy and advanced thought generally, during recent years the author was led to make a study of Theosophical and occult literature which resulted in his writing several books on these topics, which have helped many seeking for new light on spiritual matters and their attendant problems. Thus, in sketching, in this book, the highlights and chief incidents of that adventure in living life has been to him, the author has provided his readers not only with a vivid and enthralling narrative, but with something far more important in every way: a key to the understanding of some of the deeper truths relative to man's threefold nature — that of body, mind and spirit.



# ADVENTURE IN LIVING



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*The Autobiography of a Myope*

*by*

HARRY BENJAMIN



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TO ELSIE

*'Tis a poor thing, but mine own!*





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## PREFACE

A MYOPE (i.e., one who is *myopic*) is a person who is short-sighted, and therefore unable to distinguish physical objects clearly. As the author of this book has been subject to a very high degree of myopia almost from birth (and nearly lost his sight altogether at one time), it can be taken that as far as he is concerned the physical environment in which he has lived, whether related to persons, scenery, or anything else, has never been really acutely defined, although naturally the closer the object, the more clearly has it been seen. Thus there has existed a permanent inability to see with maximum clarity the physical events of the external world. But, at the same time (and this, incidentally, is the main reason for the writing of this book), coincident with this inability to see the "passing show" of external events clearly, has gradually developed the ability to see *behind* the objective episodes of existence into the deeper realms beyond, in which the true causal nexus of things has its being. Thus has wisdom come, over the years, as the result of much personal suffering and disillusionment, through the application of these deeper truths in the author's life, as they have been progressively more accurately apprehended, and more than recompensed him for the lack of visual acuity he possessed.

In general, the person who sees well is taken up so much with what he is looking at—whether a member of the opposite sex, a lovely view, the actions accompanying the wordy arguments of conflicting ideologists, or what-not—that he finds it very difficult indeed to abstract himself mentally from what he is seeing and so be able to make a proper appraisal of his day-to-day activities, personal problems and entanglements. He is involved so deeply in everything, by virtue of being so close to it through his ability to see everything so clearly, that he is unable to gain that necessary detachment

which is essential for making correct judgments of the daily affairs of life, whether personal, social, national or international. Thus, in this writer's view, the short-sighted individual has a considerable advantage here over his more clear-seeing fellow-men, because he is much more able to abstract himself from events and regard them detachedly and in perspective, with all their relevant data, through not being so directly and intimately immersed in them. (That is, of course, if he is of a cogitative and philosophical turn of mind, as the author happens to be.)

At first sight, no doubt, these remarks may seem rather specious, because most people would argue that by wearing spectacles the short-sighted individual can easily see as clearly as the normal-visioned man or woman. But this is not so. No matter how good the correction supplied by spectacles may be, except in a very small percentage of cases, the myopic individual still does not see clearly, although he undoubtedly sees much better with spectacles (in a sense) than without them. But one has to wear spectacles (especially very powerful ones, as the writer did for many years) to appreciate how they distort natural objects and scenes, etc., and bring the wearer into a realm of unreality almost as bad in its way (if not worse) than his natural lack of visual acuity provides for him. This, of course, is a purely subjective phenomenon, and not the sort of thing that oculists and opticians can be expected to understand; but it is an indubitable fact that the wearing of glasses distorts reality (in the sense of seeing the external world clearly) however much it may make it possible for the wearer to get about all right and read efficiently, etc.

The provision of spectacles to the myope, especially the high myope, is no real solution of the problem, and the result is that he is driven further and further into himself, because of his inability to contact the external world fully. In most cases this leads to a great deal of introspection and day-dreaming, and to the building up in time of a "dream world" of his own, in which the myope lives his life in compensation

for the life of the objective world in which he finds it so difficult to compete with any degree of success. The writer went through all this experience during the many years he wore glasses, so can speak from first-hand knowledge. It was only when he *discarded glasses altogether*, and, with the aid of the Bates method of visual re-education, attempted to regain some natural use of his eyes, that he began to see the dangers inherent in the wearing of spectacles from the psychological point of view (quite apart from the physiological drawbacks). In other words, the myope is so able to detach himself from the world, through his lack of ability to see clearly, that he falls into a world of phantasy and make-believe of his own devising, unless fully alive to the danger, and so loses even further contact with objective reality.

But the basic fact still remains that the myopic person can extract himself from the passing scene of existence with much greater ease than his normal-sighted contemporaries, with all the potential advantage this confers on him from the philosophical point of view, despite the attendant dangers. It is because of this myopic faculty of detachment, which has gradually increased over the years (more particularly since he left off wearing glasses altogether, nearly twenty-five years ago), coupled with a natural bent for philosophical thought about life and its problems, that the author feels he has been able to gain a clearer understanding of many of the perplexing riddles of existence than is usually vouchsafed to the average well-sighted individual. This is purely his personal opinion, of course, but he has advanced in successive stages in his inner knowledge and understanding as the years have passed, and, after due testing, the fruits of experience have been added to the fruits of further experience to form a deepening apprehension of *the basic mechanics of sentient existence*, which has led him to a view of life to which he has given an ever-widening expression in his articles and books. The writer therefore feels that the telling of his own life story, and the mental and spiritual awakening and develop-

ment thereby revealed, may be of interest to many seeking for enlightenment and understanding of the enigmas and problems of individual life.

Why call the book *Adventure in Living*? His adventures were not of the sort that include the scaling of giant mountain peaks, hair-breadth escapes, or discoveries in trackless deserts or steaming tropical jungles, it is true; that sort of adventure is left for the hardy in body. His adventures have been purely of the mind and spirit, and the writer feels that his experiences in these realms have covered a wide field and can help many other seekers after the deeper truths of existence to gain much that is of practical assistance to them.

If it should seem that there is a note of personal egotism attached to these remarks, in the sense of asserting that what has happened to him may be of interest to others, the writer would merely mention that his life for the past twenty-five years or so has been much bound up with the propagation of new thoughts and ideas relative to the health and well-being of man, as a trinity of body, mind and spirit. So that he regards the events and happenings that made him turn in those directions of thought to which he did, for new enlightenment, as likely to be of interest to many readers of his books and articles, as well as to a large circle of potential readers who have so far not come in contact with them. At least that is what the writer feels and hopes, and the rest must be left to the reader to decide! In the meantime let us wish all who take up the present volume "happy reading!" We hope the hours spent on it will be interestingly passed, as well as rendered well worth-while from wider and deeper aspects.

## FORMATIVE YEARS

WHENEVER I see children happily and busily engaged in playing in the streets anywhere, my mind immediately goes back to my own childhood spent in the East End of London. I doubt whether any child could have had a happier time than we children did then, despite the fact that we all came from the poorer strata of society, and had very little with which to pay for any amenities to our playing. My brother and I each received one penny a week on Saturdays to buy ourselves sweets with, and during schooldays we had one farthing given to us, to spend on ourselves on the way to school each morning. Not very much by modern standards, but it is surprising how far farthings went in those days, just at the beginning of this century.

However, having been very short-sighted almost from birth, the number and type of games in which I myself was allowed to take part were rather limited, and in any case I soon discovered that my real bent was for reading rather than outdoor activities. However, I indulged in outdoor games as far as I could, and they gave me great enjoyment—only marred at times by such things as the sudden appearance of a “bobby” just in the middle of a fiercely contested game of cricket, when a willing lamp-post acted as wicket, and every window in the street went in jeopardy of our more exuberant hitting. Whenever there arose any doubts as to whether an individual was out or not out, if he happened to own the bat or ball the game was being played with, and disagreed with the decision, the game thereupon ended rather abruptly. The dissatisfied one took his bat or ball and went home, leaving the others unable to continue playing any further! This same abrupt method of termination was likely to happen to



any ball game.

I understand from my mother that I began to talk at ten months, and began to walk at the same age; and it was not long after that it was discovered that my sight was far from normal. However, nothing was done about this until the time came for me to go to school, when I was taken to the Westminster Eye Hospital to have my eyes tested. It was there revealed that I had a very high degree of myopia for a child of five, and was put into very strong glasses. These were the first of the glasses I was destined to wear for many years after, which were of gradually increasing strength and thickness, until in time my eyes appeared almost as dots to the casual observer, owing to the terrific power of the lenses.

The first school I went to was at Swan Street in the City of London, and I always remember the headmaster, old Mr. Ashfield, telling my mother that he wished he had more pupils in the school like her three children. We all won Junior County Scholarships, and thereby set up a school record, although in my own case I had to win the scholarship twice, as I was disqualified the first time for being too young. It seems that I was about a month younger than the lowest age allowed for the entrants for the examination, and when this was discovered, the scholarship was taken away from me and I was told I must sit for it all over again the following year. This I did, and came through again successfully, and later went to the Central Foundation Boys' School in Cowper Street, where I spent several very happy years. Despite the handicap of progressively more powerful glasses, most of my spare time was spent in reading, and every day there was another boys' paper to purchase, besides books to be borrowed from the local Public Library.

Those boys' papers! One day it was *The Gem*, with Tom Merry and Co., another day *The Magnet*, with Harry Wharton, Billy Bunter and the rest; another day it was the *Union Jack*, with Sexton Blake, Tinker and their bloodhound Pedro; another day it was *The Marvel* (or was it *Pluck*?),

describing the incredible adventures of Jack, Sam and Pete; and so on and so forth. Every day a thrill not to be missed at any price, and eagerly to be discussed with the other boys of one's acquaintance. Then of course there were *Comic Cuts* and *Chips*, to say nothing about more adult literature (so-called) such as *Answers*, *Tit-bits*, etc. All such reading material was eagerly devoured every day, often in not too good a light, so that it is not to be wondered at that my eyes steadily got worse and worse, and stronger and stronger lenses were provided. At the Public Library my chief favourites were books by Rider Haggard, Captain Marryat and such-like writers of adventure by land and sea. It was later that I got to know about Dickens, Thackeray and other novelists portraying English social life and characteristics. Mark Twain soon became a favourite too. Shakespeare and Milton we had to imbibe at secondary school, rather to the detriment of our enjoyment of them in more mature years, it must be confessed.

But there was always reading of some kind on hand, and as the years passed my penchant was more and more for the more serious type of literature, and less and less for the flippant or merely adventurous. I began to sense that adventure for me was more of the mind and spirit than of the physical body, although I still enjoyed playing games as far as my visual handicap would allow. This meant, of course, no "rough games," which ruled out the majority of games that boys enjoy most.

Home life was as happy as a not very secure income could make it, there being periods when my father had so much work to do as a maker of waistcoats as he could manage by staying up to one and two in the morning, for weeks on end, interspersed with equal periods when he had practically no work to do at all, when the home exchequer was correspondingly embarrassed. It always struck me as strange that he should have chosen so precarious a mode of livelihood, but I

was given to understand that waistcoat-making was a very lucrative business when he first took it up, and so he continued with it. He worked for a number of large City tailoring firms, who gave out their garments to be made by several tailors who worked in their own homes as my father did. One made coats, another waistcoats, and another trousers; the man who fared best of all was the coat-maker, because he was always sure of a busy winter season making overcoats, whereas the waistcoat and trouser-makers had only one real season—during the spring and summer—and had to get along as best they could during the off-season, which was the winter, when money was needed most.

No doubt all this sort of thing is quite out of date these days, but in the early years of this century there was a very brisk trade going on in the making of men's garments in the homes of master-tailors, as they were called (because they had a staff of workpeople whom they employed) in rooms set aside for the purpose. Some used one or two rooms in their homes as workshops, others had workshops which were attached to their homes as we did. My father at one time employed quite a large staff, but as the years passed his income dwindled more and more, until he had only a few old faithful "hands" working for him. It was always his ambition that his children should never do manual work such as he did, and he spent far more on us than his earnings warranted, to see that we had a good educational start in life. What money he managed to save during his busy season was more often than not drained off in this way, apart from the fact that he had an impecunious brother always on hand for loans to tide him over his own slack periods as a master-tailor.

Thus life was something of a struggle economically, but we children did not understand a great deal of what went on, and we certainly never lacked food or clothing, or the usual amenities of existence. One thing we never had and that

was a holiday of any kind, such as many other children had. We never had the delight of a yearly holiday by the sea or in the country, and had to be content with a day at Brighton or Southend as a special treat, on August Bank Holiday or other special occasion. Then we had excursion tickets and had to fight for seats in an over-packed train, which took several hours to do a journey usually accomplished in a quarter of that time. Then, after everyone's temper had been ruffled by the noise, excitement, squeezing, shouting, etc., we were disgorged at the seaside for a few hours of "enjoyment" with pail and shovel specially bought for the purpose, and seaside rock, and all the other treats of those early Edwardian seaside excursion days. Needless to say there were many times when there were wet eyes and noisy scenes because we were not allowed to do what some other children were doing. We always went home with everyone's nerves quite frayed, to spend several more hours in an even more crowded train, which persisted in stopping for unknown reasons for long stretches between stations, until we eventually arrived at Liverpool Street or London Bridge or Fenchurch Street more asleep than awake, entirely indifferent to everything that was going on, with irritable parents carrying us home to bed. That was the way we enjoyed ourselves in those very early days of this century!

Only once do I remember spending a real holiday in the country as a child, and that was when I was about eleven or twelve. I went to a little place near Tring in Hertfordshire with the Children's Country Holiday Fund, and spent a very happy fortnight there with my brother and several boy friends. It was the first time I had ever really been *in* the country, and little did I realise then what an important part the country was to play in my later life. Many were the memories I brought back from that fortnight's holiday, among them my brother falling into a stream and having to have all his clothes hung up on a line in the garden to dry; my cousin catching three roach in about as many minutes in

the canal near there, the first time he had ever done any angling; our giving the fishing rod to one of the village boys before leaving on the condition that he would first jump into the canal with his clothes on, which he did; the annual agricultural show in Lord Rothschild's Park near Tring; a cricket match on a nearby village green wherein a fast boundary hit me on the leg; the smell in the local village stores of bacon, cheese, paraffin, balls of twine, and everything else all mixed up together in one never-to-be-forgotten odour, which I can always revive at will; the penny stamps which our parents sent us which we changed at the said village stores for sweets and other good things; a breath-taking sunset seen from the top of Ivinghoe Beacon; in short, an unfailing store of memories which were permanently engraved on my mind, because they were unique in my childhood history.

The one fly in the ointment in home life was our father's insistence that we followed the traditional orthodox Jewish way of life as regards attendance at synagogue, observance of Saturdays and holidays, learning of Hebrew, etc. My brother and I instinctively rebelled at all this, and herein was the main source of those many wordy conflicts which I personally had with my father and which grew in heatedness until his early death at the age of fifty-one. My brother, being younger and far more even-tempered than I was in those days, did not get my father so upset and annoyed over these matters as I did; and I must confess that if he had lived to be older than he did, I would have had to leave home, because I could never accept the ritualism and orthodoxy of the faith which to my father was everything. To me it was something which was far too narrowing and restricting to the mind and spirit, and even as a boy I evinced my opposition in no uncertain manner.

There was much that we enjoyed of the traditional Jewish holidays and festivities : the Passover, New Year, and so forth. And many are the amusing episodes I can recall of events that

took place at that small synagogue in Wellclose Square in East London of which my father was a member. All the members knew each other intimately, and had done so for years, so there was always a sort of family atmosphere about the place when we children went there on "high days and holidays." Every excuse was taken for a feast or an opportunity for a drink of whisky or brandy among the assembled members, and they waxed merry together on all possible occasions connected with birth, confirmation or marriage. (Oh, those Jewish weddings! What gargantuan feats of eating and drinking were there performed!) Deaths were the truly solemn events of the sort of communal social life these simple folk led, and everyone shared in everyone else's losses and bereavements with the greatest sincerity. It is no doubt impossible for those who have never seen the kind of communal existence these old-fashioned Jewish men lived to appreciate how close were the ties that bound them in all the events of social and family life. They would always rally to the financial assistance of any member who was doing badly, even though on the average they were not very well off themselves. They were nearly all working men and had to do a very hard week's work to keep their families and themselves, and not one of them could be called rich by any stretch of the imagination.

Their outlook and views were all narrowly restricted to their religion and racial beliefs, and such parochialism of outlook my brother and myself found impossible to accept. We found this same refusal of acceptance on the part of many of the sons of these men who themselves saw in their orthodox faith (and the social life that revolved around it) the be-all and end-all of existence; and to-day there is very little left of this outlook in the average Jewish man or woman. Traces of it are still to be found in certain quarters no doubt, but in general it has disappeared together with so much that was familiar in those far-off East-End days.

Those days were *the days* of the music-hall, incidentally,

and as special treats we were given 2d. each to go in the gallery at the local music-hall, where we saw such giants of fame as Marie Lloyd, Little Tich, Wilkie Bard, George Robey and all the other scintillating names of that era. The London and the Cambridge, the Paragon and the Foresters, these are names to conjure up memories in the minds of many East-Enders of the late Victorian and early Edwardian days. What happy hours we spent there as children, and how we enjoyed every second and minute of it all! As we grew older we ventured "up West" to the Tivoli and the Oxford, where, on a Saturday afternoon, one could get a seat in the gallery for 6d. We used to walk there and back, my brother and I, and such adventures were marked with an asterisk in our imaginations for long afterwards. Happy memories indeed!

In those far-off East-End days people used to sit out of doors in the summer evenings, and thought nothing of staying up to the early hours of the morning, laughing and joking among themselves; and it is surprising when one looks back to think how much real happiness they secured from life despite their often pressing economic difficulties, plenty of sickness in the home, etc. No one was well off in any sense of the word; but they all got something out of life which seems strangely lacking in these more blasé days. Their lives were simple, and their pleasures simple, and no doubt that was the secret of their happiness. Occasionally events were enlivened by a small flutter on the Derby or other big race; but the main outlet for the gambling instinct was cards. Solo whist was the game everyone played, amongst the adults; and for a few coppers they had the most enjoyable evenings beating each other's seemingly unbeatable hands, holding inquests after each game, and in general having the time of their lives after a hard day spent in the workshop or factory.

It was when I was about ten or eleven that the films first came into existence. I remember we used to pay ½d. for the privilege of standing on a form at the back of some musty

hall to see pictures of Tontolini, Max Lister, Flora Finch, John Bunny, and the other comics of those early days of the bioscope, as it was then called, each picture being seen through what seemed like a continual downpour of rain. Later halls got more elaborate and prices increased, but one could still get in for 1d. in some places, and there we saw the first Charlie Chaplin films, when he played for the Keystone Co. My own sight being what it was, too much film-going was not advisable, and I gradually went less and less often as the years passed. But at least I did see the birth of that colossal new industry, which people these days accept as a normal part of their lives.

I also saw the advent of the motor-car and telephone, which people nowadays accept as inevitable accompaniments to living; and of course much later I saw the first introduction of the radio. As children we knew nothing of what lay in store in those directions, and instead of turning on the radio or going to the films for our entertainment *we made our entertainment for ourselves*—and with much greater enjoyment all round. At home all life gravitated around my mother, who not only had to look after the house and us children, do all the shopping, etc., but had to work in the workshop as well, helping my father. She kept up this “double duty” for many years, and when my father died had to start out and work harder still to keep us children. Life was therefore far from easy for either of our parents in their various ways, but every Friday night (the Jewish Sabbath) was a “special treat” night, which we always strictly observed, with extra “good things” for us all; and we were always having games and story-books brought home for us on pay day, which was Saturday morning, in my father’s case. He went then to collect his money from the firms in the City he worked for, and always returned with something for us (usually in his hat!) and with a glass or two of spirits inside him. Like most Jewish men of his kind, he was a large meat-eater, a heavy smoker, and liked spirits, which habits



all contributed to his early death from Bright's disease.

Because a relative of ours had a son who had entered the Civil Service, it was decided that I should enter for the Boy Clerk's examination for that Service, and to that end my scholastic career was terminated abruptly, at the age of fifteen. I was entered for the appropriate examination and passed, and in due course was sent to the General Post Office to work in several of the more trivial and unheard-of clerical and accountancy departments of that institution. I earned the munificent sum of 15s. a week, which was a great help to my parents no doubt, in those days, and for myself was allowed 2s. 6d. a week, to include bus fares and incidental expenses generally. Of course I walked instead of riding, and used to spend my money mainly on chocolate, which was a ruling passion with me in those days (and still is, if I only allowed myself to indulge my desire for it!).

I soon discovered that the work we were set to do per day could be managed in about half the time specified, so that we could earn extra money very often by doing what was called "extra duty," which we could perform during the afternoon when our ordinary work was finished and we had spare time on our hands. Thus this "extra duty," which was supposed to be performed after the completion of the ordinary day's work, was carried out during the 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. which was the normal Civil Service day (10 a.m. to 5 p.m. in winter), so that I often earned quite a few shillings extra weekly without working any real overtime at all! I always gave my brother some of the extra money, but in general hardly knew quite what to do with it, and frittered it away aimlessly as boys of fifteen and sixteen will do. My social life was extremely limited, and my main pre-occupation was still reading. But I did take in an occasional West-End show, and regarded the life there depicted as glamorous in the extreme! (It was the early days of revue at the Hippodrome, Empire and Alhambra.)

The main limiting factor to social intercourse, especially with the opposite sex, was the enormously powerful glasses I wore, which set up a sort of inferiority complex, which, added to my already rather shy and sensitive nature, effectively kept me very much to my immediate home circle and few intimate friends. One of these friends was very proud of his literary abilities, having won some fine scholastic awards for literary essays of various kinds; and it was he who first introduced me to rambling. He had some country rambles copied out from one of the books by "Walker Miles," and it was with him, my brother, and one or two other friends, that I went on my first country ramble, from Dorking to Leith Hill and back. Little did I imagine then what a profound part country walking was to play in my later life, but at that time I remember we were but mildly interested in the scenery, and chased butterflies, ate ice-cream, and played about generally as boys of fourteen will do.

This same friend said that he knew he would be an author when he grew up, to which assertion I paid admiring tribute, because it never occurred to me at all that I would ever write any books myself, and the thought of being an author seemed a dazzling prospect. Incidentally, this same friend never became an author; instead he became a prosperous ladies' garment manufacturer and champion ballroom dancer, which only shows we never know what destiny has in store for us. But in those youthful days, what glorious discussions we had about all kinds of books! It was then that I first began to formulate ideas of my own about life in general, although no doubt of a very primitive character, as befitted my youth and knowledge.

My brother, being of a far more social nature than myself, a good all-round athlete, and fond of games of all kinds, used to spend most of his spare time at certain Boys' Clubs in the East End, and always had hosts of friends of either sex. I tended to lead a rather solitary life, despite my association with a few intimate companions. One of my chief

diversions at that time was playing the piano by ear. At an earlier age my father had paid for me to be taught the piano, but I would never take to it seriously, and never practised; and when I had a touch of St. Vitus' Dance, our family doctor said I should give up learning to play, which I did with fervent gratitude. But it was the days when "ragtime" was coming into vogue, and my brother and I learnt how to play ragtime very well indeed by ear, and I gradually became the star performer on the family piano. I only had to hear a tune once or twice before I could sit down and play it right off, with all the harmonics included, and in time I gained quite a local reputation as a "jazz pianist." This rôle seemed rather out of keeping with my enormously powerful spectacles and studious and reserved nature; but it is surprising what varied things we mortals can do which do not seem at all congruous, if we have the urge to do them. As I see it now, all my unexpressed (and inexpressible) creative energy and zest for living went into the playing of those old-time jazz tunes, and that was why I played as well as I did. I put *all of myself* into it, and when, years later, I found other creative outlets for myself, this piano playing gradually fell into abeyance until eventually I could not play a note. At one time in my career as a jazz pianist I even deputised on occasion for really good performers at dance halls, special dances, and so forth, to earn some extra cash, and playing with five- or six-piece bands; so I could not have been too bad, even if I say it myself.

In pursuance of my keen interest in jazz, I used to go every Sunday morning to Petticoat Lane to listen to the records being played on certain stalls there which sold gramophones and records. I could stand there for hours, even on cold winter days, hearing all the latest dance tunes and going home to practise them afterwards on the piano. In those far-off days the "Ragtime Octette" were all the rage, and in addition to avidly listening to all their records, I would follow them round from music-hall to music-hall all over

London, when they paid a visit here. Those were the days of *The Robert E. Lee*, *Hitchy Koo*, etc., and amongst our own circle of friends we got up our own octette, with myself at the piano, and sang all their songs to our hearts' content, and with the greatest gusto, although what the effect was on our elders at the time we hardly stopped to consider!

Life in the Civil Service was not very exciting, and I had no real interest in my work or prospects. I knew I would have to sit for the Second Division examination when I was eighteen, to enter a higher grade of the Service, and so had to spend my evenings at evening classes polishing up the subjects I would have to take then. But my heart was never in it at all, and despite the hard-earned money my father spent on all this tuition and extra training, I must confess I often went to the cinema instead of to night classes, and so was not surprised to find I had failed in the exam. when I eventually sat for it. However, the Great War broke out at just that time, so everything was thrown into a turmoil, and any plans for the future I might have had (should I have had them) would have been upset in any case. I left the Civil Service, therefore, and took a wartime post at the L.C.C. Offices on Victoria Embankment, but found the work there no more interesting or congenial than at the G.P.O. But later, being unfit for military service owing to my very bad sight, I got a job working at the Medical Board at the Shoreditch Town Hall, where I stayed for about two years. It was rather pathetic at first to see the streams of naked men coming into the cubicles to be examined, hour after hour during every day, with the knowledge that they would soon be sent overseas to fight in the trenches; but I got used to it all very speedily I must confess, and took the whole thing as just a matter of course, as doctors and students get to do in any hospital. Our feelings get rather atrophied under such conditions, and we lose the power to feel really strongly about the thoughts and emotions of those passing through our hands.

I was chief clerk to one of the doctors at the Medical

Board, and soon showed a keen aptitude for sizing up a man during his examination. In fact, after a time the doctor got to asking me what I thought about this man or that, and was quite surprised at my keen judgment of their physical condition. One day he said: "Benjamin, you should have been a doctor!" at which remark I laughed, not realising in the slightest what the future had in store for me as a Naturopath. It was obviously a case of "coming events casting their shadows before," as I so often found happening in my life.

The Medical Board eventually closed down, and I drifted to a job at the Admiralty, where I used to spend my time cataloguing ships that had been sunk by U-boats, and other similar grim tasks which I now cannot clearly remember. But my eyes had been getting progressively worse through all these years, and it was at this point that I was advised by an eminent eye specialist, whom I used to visit every year, to give up clerical work and "go and live in the country." When I enquired of him what I was to do in the country to earn a living, I obtained no satisfactory reply at all. It seemed that having told me what I ought to do, that was the end of the matter as far as he was concerned.

I had been under this specialist for a number of years and it was often very hard indeed to pay the two guineas' fee for the yearly consultation. But my parents thought that it was the only thing to do, in my own best future interests. All this great man did was to look at my eyes, shake his head and mumble to himself under his breath, and prescribe stronger and stronger lenses for me, without giving one solitary word of advice about how to care for my eyes, except to say that I was not to do much reading. As reading was the one joy of my existence, it can be imagined what this advice meant to me, and I still kept up my reading whilst I could manage to read fairly comfortably, although at one time a retinal hæmorrhage developed in one eye as a result of this, and I had to stay at home from work for several months.

My health had never been too robust, and our old family doctor was always prescribing "nerve tonics" for me; and when the hæmorrhage occurred I was in a very run-down state, having T.B. neck glands at the same time. This same old family doctor made a sorry mess of the gland condition, and when he confessed he could do nothing more for me,\* I went to another doctor of good local repute and he advised me to go to the London Hospital to have an operation performed on my neck. I went to the hospital, but one look at the way the patients were treated sent me home again in a hurry, and eventually I persuaded this new doctor to cut the glands himself, in his own surgery, with myself as assistant, holding the bowl in which to catch the blood. He complimented me on what he called my "bravery," but I was determined not to have any hospital attention—especially after what had happened at Golden Square!—and was prepared to put up with anything rather than that. It was a very good thing I acted as I did, as this doctor only drained the affected glands, and left the rest intact, whereas at the hospital all the lymphatic glands on that side of my neck would have been removed. To this day I feel the effect of that lymphatic weakness, despite my strict adherence to Diet Reform for many years now; so what would have happened if I had let the hospital surgeon operate on me?

This same doctor took an interest in me, because I was always asking him medical questions; and he too hinted that I would have done well in the medical line. But nothing was further from my thoughts in those days, although I was always keenly interested in the books the doctor used to get

\*As part of his "trial and error" treatment, he sent me to Golden Square Hospital to have my tonsils removed. Owing to the war and the shortage of doctors, the operation was performed by a young woman student, with the result that I nearly bled to death, and had to stay in the hospital for several days with clips in my throat to stop the bleeding. When I was able to get up again I found that one of the wounded soldiers in the ward (of whom there were a large number) had taken my watch and chain and all my cash, except one penny! With that I had to get home as best I could.

out and show me in answer to my questions.

Having been told by the eye specialist that I must give up all clerical work, I was faced by a difficult problem, especially as my father had died a few months earlier. (He had left the house as usual, for business, one lovely May morning, in 1917, and collapsed in the street after walking only a few yards. He was brought home unconscious, and died shortly afterwards.) At the time of his death my sister was still at school, my brother was in the Air Force (the Royal Flying Corps then), and I was the only one at home earning any money at all. Therefore my mother decided she would go out to work herself, and good fortune was on her side for once. Her younger brother had recently started in the blouse business, as there was a craze for blouses and jumpers in those war days, and he fixed her up with a set of samples and gave her some of his own customers to call on. My mother did quite well as a blouse salesman (or rather saleswoman) and for a number of years kept up this occupation, until my brother came back from the Forces and got a job at the *Banca Commerciale Italiana*, and my sister began going out to work too. However, my mother's venture saved us financially at home, there can be no doubt, and truth to tell she quite enjoyed her daily visits to her customers, and the chats over cups of tea and bus rides round London. It was all such a change from her previous life in the home and workshop.

My father's death at the early age of fifty-one was mainly due to the causes I have already mentioned, but he grieved greatly when my brother joined up, fearing he would never see him again; and he was also very depressed because he had had, at last, to give up his own business after all these years and go and work as manager for his brother, the same impecunious one he had helped for so long. This brother had taken over a large factory when the war broke out, to do government work—i.e., to make greatcoats and uniforms—and offered my father a good post there. But he always

regretted the move, and in my view all these factors combined led to his early death. If I had only known then what I know now about Nature Cure, his life could no doubt have been saved. But at that time I accepted whatever the doctors said as gospel, like everyone else, and so nothing effective was done to save him from his doom as a sufferer from chronic nephritis.

In those days we all ate conventional food, and no doubt our diet was sadly defective from the Diet Reform point of view. But we never went in for the traditional heavy meals of some Jewish families, which, among other killing diseases, lead so many of them to develop diabetes in later life. The number of Jewish people who suffer from diabetes is staggering, in comparison to their proportion of the population, and this is evidently entirely due to their unwise feeding habits and the masses of farinaceous food they eat. The only day of the year they abstain from eating is the Day of Atonement, and as soon as that is over they seem resolved to make up at the table for the three or four meals sacrificed in order to "atone for their sins" for the past year.

At the little synagogue to which my father took us as children it always was rather surprising to see how the members used to weep and castigate themselves on this great fast day, the most solemn in the Jewish year, in the belief that by so doing they could really atone for their sins.\* They all firmly believed it, however, which must have been very comforting to their minds when they went back to their usual ways of living the following day. To my brother and myself the whole idea was incomprehensible, and made no sense at all. We instinctively accepted the idea that no one (or no thing) could atone for our sins *but ourselves*, and that nothing of a ritualistic nature such as our parents and their

\* Perhaps I should explain here that in a synagogue the women are kept strictly segregated from the men, in an upper gallery. Consequently we, as boys, saw very little of them during a service, but only the men members present and their sons.



friends firmly believed in could save us from any possible effects from our transgressions (either overt or covert).

It was during the war, in January, 1916, that we at last moved away from the East End where we had spent all our lives previously. My parents arranged to share a large house in Stoke Newington with one of my mother's brothers and his wife and family, and the change was all to the good in many ways. At last we had shaken off the sordid surroundings of East-End life which, although they did not really affect us ourselves or the home life we led, nevertheless impinged on our consciousness at every turn, as it were, and supplied the drab background to all our thoughts and activities. It is surprising to realise how little we as children were affected by the kind of scenes that were such a common feature of East-End existence in those early days of the twentieth century. Constant fights and brawls between drunken men and women; obscenity freely flowing on all sides; coarseness and vulgarity everywhere; and plenty of squalor and dirt.

If I say here that these common features of East-End life were contributed mainly by the Gentile population of the district, I hope it will not be taken by my readers as mere racial pride or prejudice. I regard myself as pre-eminently English rather than Jewish, and sincerely hope I am tolerably free from that besetting sin of most people—i.e., pride in their own race or nation to the extent of not being able to see its faults or misdeeds at all. The Jewish race has its faults, goodness knows: too many of them! And no one could be more aware of the fact than myself, who have had to suffer through the years vicariously for the foolishness and follies and mistakes and misdeeds of the Jewish people to whom I am tied by bonds of blood. They have contributed their quota to the grandeur as well as the ignominy of humanity, and have endured more than their fair share of persecution; and I feel we can leave it at that. With regard to the particular condi-

tions of East-End life to which I have just referred, therefore, I feel I am fully justified in saying they were mainly supplied by the non-Jewish portion of the population who resided there—i.e., the commonest kind of Cockney elements and their associates. Many of such people were merely “rough diamonds” and very good-natured, kindly folk; and my brother and myself (and indeed our whole family) got on very well with them indeed, and it was surprising to see what respect the toughest of them showed for my parents and grandparents. But that does not detract from the fact that life in the East End in those days was raw in the extreme. However, as I have just said, it did not have any appreciable derogatory effect on us either as individuals or as a family. We simply ignored it, and so it did not affect us.

At our new home we had a garden at last; but I am afraid it was rather sadly neglected, as none of us knew how to look after it. However, it had some lilacs and laburnums, and other flowering shrubs and trees, and it was very quiet there; and all in all it was a tremendous contrast to the teeming East-End life we had left behind with its littered streets, noisy children, frowsty backyards, etc. It was when we had moved to North London that I at last began to blossom out somewhat as a more social being, in the sense of going out more with my cousins and the youths of the vicinity. We used to congregate every evening on Stamford Hill Broadway, and often went up to Finsbury Park to the Café at the Rink Cinema; but I personally always played the part of looker-on when it came to the more exciting pastime of “getting off” with the young ladies of the neighbourhood, who congregated at these same spots. My cousins and friends were well versed in the arts of “lady-killing,” but my own nature (and the terrifically strong glasses I wore) effectually prevented me from taking any active part in such amorous adventures, however innocuous they might be (and were). But it did give me a slant on things I had never experienced before, and was good material for filling up the missing parts in the canvas of

life my mind was painting for me at that time. Many and weird were the adventures some of the older and more dashing of these young Don Juans and Casanovas recounted to us admiring youngsters; but more and more of them had to depart to don the King's uniform and fight for their country, and more than once our nocturnal meanderings were cut short by air-raid alarms, if not actual air-raids. Of course such raids were child's play to the experiences some went through in the Second World War; but in those days they were quite alarming enough in all conscience, and I shall never forget the two Zeppelins I saw come down in flames during those dark wartime nights. (At one time when I worked at the Shoreditch Town Hall there was a daylight raid, and a bomb dropped right outside the building, as we crowded on to the steps to see what was going on. Fortunately for us it did not explode!)

During this same epoch I began to take an interest in clothes, which I had not done previously; and I spent a goodly part of my income on dressing up in the latest-style suits, shirts, hats, shoes, ties, etc. When my brother came home from the Flying Corps on leave, I often encountered him in the West End dressed up in "civvies," only to discover on closer examination that these same "civvies" were from my own wardrobe! Being in the Forces and having no smart clothes of his own he quite naturally thought it only right to wear mine! In those same far-off war days we often frequented the "Corner House," "Maison Lyons" and "The Pop," and it was the custom for us all to go by train on Saturday evenings to Church End, Finchley, to the Bohemia there. This was a rather nice dance hall and cinema combined, where you paid to go into the pictures and the dancing was thrown in free. It was there I learnt to do some ball-room dancing, although never very satisfactorily; and it was there we first came across the one-step and fox-trot which were just becoming the vogue. Whenever our friends or relatives came home on war leave (some from the Dominions)

they were always taken to the Bohemia, and many a pleasant and cheap evening did we spend there.

As I have mentioned, it was in these circumstances that I had to give up my job at the Admiralty, as I was not allowed to do any more clerical work, and had to find another mode of livelihood. The three years that followed were among the worst in my life, because of their uncertainty, enforced periods of idleness, and mental and spiritual inertia; and on looking back I can regard them as the darkness that preceded the dawn of a new life which was to begin in 1921. But between 1918 and 1921 I floated around aimlessly from job to job, as a traveller in cheap jewellery, handbags, ladies' garments, and anything I could get hold of, in order to earn a few shillings a week for myself and not have to depend on my mother's earnings for entire support. Needless to say both the type of work in question and the need to look to my mother for financial aid were totally repugnant to me; but conditions were such that at the time I could find no other way out from the quandary my very bad sight had placed me in.

There was one short break during that period, however, when I turned my knowledge of dancing and the dance mania of those later war days to good account. I got a friend to join me in starting a 1s. dance at a large Public Baths in South London, every Thursday night for the winter of 1918-19. Our luck was in, because the war ended soon after the season began, and we were flooded out with young men and women celebrating the end of the war and their return to civilian life. We engaged a good jazz band, which for those days was quite unusual in that type of dance, and for the price we charged we gave very good value indeed. The dances were billed as "Anglo-American," and we thereby roped in a goodly number of the American Forces then in this country. My mother and sister thoroughly enjoyed coming to the weekly dance and helping to serve behind the bar, and all

in all we enjoyed the venture enormously, especially as I made quite a good bit out of it financially, which kept me for several months afterwards. But intrigue behind the scenes, owing to the jealousy of the man who had the letting of the hall (who had never anticipated our success, and was really furious over it, because he would never have let us have the hall otherwise), decided me to drop the venture when the season was over, never to try that sort of thing again.

At that time I also earned an occasional guinea or two by playing myself in dance bands, as I have already mentioned; and I even had a slight glimpse into the gambling craze, and the life of the racecourse and the betting world. It seemed that I was destined to sample some of the more sinister and baneful influences in social life, in order to get quite disentangled from them afterwards for the rest of my existence. (I even tried my hand at smoking and drinking, but gave them both up with alacrity!) The life on the racecourse nauseated me completely: it was so coarse and vile, when one approached it closely, that it amazes me that people can regard it in any other light. It did not take me long to give up that sort of way of spending my time, and what with one thing and another I felt that I had certainly seen something of the seamy side of life.

On April 1st, 1921, my whole life-pattern changed more or less abruptly, to conform more and more closely thereafter, as the years passed, to that which it portrays today. The change was not immediate, of course, but it definitely had its inception on that date, as I have every cause to remember. It was a date of destiny for me; a turning-point in my career, when I forsook the aimless and flippant life I had led the previous few years and entered upon a new phase in the mental and spiritual unfolding of my nature, which in those years had seemed quite submerged by the events I had been passing through. Thus this is a fitting point to end this first chapter, which portrays those formative years

when the fluttering spirit within began to make its presence dimly and tentatively felt, at some periods more clearly than others, at some not discernible at all.

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## CHAPTER II

### EXPANDING HORIZONS

BEFORE embarking on the subject-matter proper of this chapter, I feel I ought to conclude the unofficial history of the birth of jazz music begun in the previous chapter, just for the sake of the record, as it were. To that end I must say something about the arrival of the "Original Dixieland Jazz Band" in this country in about 1920. They were the real pioneers of present-day jazz music, and their famous *Tiger Rag* is still a hot favourite among jazz addicts. They were brought over to play at Rector's Night Club in Tottenham Court Road, and their advent in this country caused a furore amongst all lovers of jazz, as their tunes and records were as famous here as in America.

I remember that some jazz-minded friends and I used to go as often as possible to listen to the Dixieland, not inside Rector's (we could not afford that!) but *outside*. We used to foregather at the back entrance, and go down some steps, at about 11 p.m., when the dancing had begun, and we could then hear the band playing quite distinctly and to our heart's content. And were we thrilled! Later the owners of Rector's opened the Palais de Danse at Hammersmith, and to bring as large a crowd of dancers there as possible, at 5s. a head, the Dixieland were installed there as chief attraction; and our need to have to creep down the back stairs at Rector's no longer existed. We paid our 5s. and could both listen (and dance) to them all the evening in comfort. As my interest in jazz later waned, I lost all touch with the further development of it over here; but I feel that what I have said on the subject may be of interest to some of my readers.

Another feature of our new life in North London was our keen interest in the Tottenham Hotspur Football Club. The

'Spurs were our favourites, and we heartily detested the Arsenal, who had recently come to Highbury from Woolwich. There was always the keenest rivalry between the supporters of both teams, who together represented North London; and it was our good fortune to follow the 'Spurs in their record-breaking season of 1919-20, when they won the Second Division Championship with 70 points, and captured the F.A. Cup the following year. What a team they were, and how we used to rave and roar over them! How vividly do I still remember the fourth-round Cup Tie in 1920 against Aston Villa which 'Spurs lost 1—0 although they had ninety-nine per cent of the game!

I have never seen a team so overplayed and demoralised as were the Villa on that occasion, yet they "won" by a goal scored by Tommy Clay, the Tottenham full-back, who misjudged a clearance (which he was trying to effect by an overhead kick) and sent the ball into his own net! The Villa goal bore a charmed existence that day. Shots were poured in from all angles, and from point-blank range, but the ball *would* not enter the net. Sam Hardy, the Villa goalkeeper, was beaten time and again, but the ball hit the crossbar or posts and rebounded into play. The whole thing was uncanny. The Villa went on to win the Cup after that; but Tottenham got their revenge next season when the two teams met again at White Hart Lane in the fourth round, and this time 'Spurs won 1—0, and went on to win the Cup for the second time in their history.

My interest in football (as in jazz, dancing, etc.) waned after 1921, on account of more important developments in my life; but I do remember that it was thanks to football that I got my first glimpse into the way the Press tampers with the truth and gives its own biased views on events to its readers. I used to read *The Daily Chronicle* in those days, and their star sports reporter was someone who called himself "Corinthian." I used to read his reports of the games I had seen at Tottenham and used to marvel at the way in



which they distorted all that had happened (at least to my view). If I thought Tottenham had played well, he invariably thought otherwise; and *vice versa*. I soon began to see that football reporting was nothing other than the purely personal opinion of one man who happened to have his own set of ideas about the subject. I applied that principle to newspaper reporting in general, with the result that from that day I have never accepted anything I have read in print at its face value (unless it is a purely factual statement).

Thus this simple experience regarding football-match reporting gave me a slant on the Press that was invaluable to me in later life, in assessing current affairs and international happenings. I thenceforth took everything with "a pinch of salt" and always read two or three newspapers of divergent political views in order to try to arrive at a balanced judgment of events. I still keep up this principle to this day and find it a most invaluable help in keeping abreast of worldly affairs in general. So I think my youthful football experience paid a handsome and unexpected dividend, especially when I hear grown men saying that "they have seen so-and-so in the papers" and therefore assume that it must be so! What crass ignorance and folly! As if every opinion expressed in a newspaper (apart from the mere cataloguing of events) is not a personal one of either the reporter, editor, or newspaper owner!

When not deliberately tendentious, through misleading headlines, special captions, etc., newspaper reports excel in presenting half-truths disguised as the truth, and so lead the reader to a completely distorted view of events. The power thus wielded by the Press to mould public opinion is enormous and sinister in the extreme; and when we realise that practically every newspaper owner is a financial magnate or someone with powerful commercial interests to preserve, and therefore with his own axe to grind, it is understandable why unorthodox views of any kind are given no chance at all for expression in the popular Press. (The Labour and Com-

munist parties have their own papers in which to express their often tendentious and equally biased views, as occasion suits them; so that what we have said above is not the result of party or class feeling of any kind. We ourselves belong to no political party, because there is not one which represents the views we hold. So our somewhat sweeping remarks about the Press spring from no desire to belittle any particular stratum of society.)

Of course we do get the truth sometimes in the Press, even about the most controversial matters; but one always has to bear in mind the man who owns the particular paper one is reading (or the party or organisation it belongs to), in order to free oneself as far as possible from the inevitable tingeing of the statements expressed with the views of the owner or the party or organisation it represents. Completely unbiased and objective reporting is an unknown thing in the modern world, it is safe to say—at least as regards the large newspapers and journals; and so I can thank my youthful football experiences for having taught me that most invaluable of lessons.\*

I intimated in the previous chapter that April 1st, 1921, was a sort of red-letter day in my life, because it marked the beginning of a complete turning-point in the mental and spiritual side of my life; but the actual event that occurred was not so seemingly important on the surface. On that day I was given a card of introduction to go up and see a certain ladies' garment manufacturer in Wardour Street, in the hope that he might be able to give me a job as a traveller; and on my way there I met one of my old associates who asked me where I was going. When I told him he tried to persuade me not to go, saying it was the same old thing as all the others and bound to turn out no good; but I persisted in going, and when I got to the address I found that the owner

\* The report of the Royal Commission on the Press, published soon after this book was completed in manuscript, amply confirms the views expressed here.

of the business was an old dancing acquaintance of my Bohemia (Finchley) days. He recognised me at once, and on my explaining that I was forced to try to earn a living by doing outdoor work of some kind, owing to the state of my eyes, he agreed to give me a chance to work for him on a purely commission basis. His garments were very expensive to the trade, and very smart and elegant in design, so I did not have to sell many articles to earn quite a tidy sum for myself. In a few months I found I was earning £10 to £15 a week with ease, and in the five years I was with him was enabled to save up over £500 for myself, which stood me in very good stead when the final crisis about my eyes came in 1926.

It was not the earning of this money that was of vital significance, although it did solve my financial difficulties for me at long last; it was the fact that this same boss of mine had quite a respect for my intellectual ability, and regarded me somewhat in the light of a "prodigy" because I eschewed all the ordinary so-called pleasures of "commercial" (i.e., smoking, drinking, gambling and girls), and went to University Extension Classes in the evenings instead. For it was after I had been with him only a few months that something inside me seemed to come to life at last, and coincident with the change in my financial fortunes, I had the urge to take up the study of subjects which hitherto I had ignored or had never even thought about.

It happened that one day I was passing Toynbee Hall in Commercial Street, in the East End, whilst on business, and glanced at the notice board there. It contained information about certain Workers' Educational Association Classes that were to be held there the coming season, to begin in September, including subjects such as economics, psychology, English literature, appreciation of music, and so forth. Something long dormant (or latent) inside me seemed to stir at this, and before I knew it I had made up my mind to go inside and obtain full details of the classes. That was the first

big step I made towards the establishment of myself in my present way of life, and that is why I always regard 1921 as the big year of my career. In that year I found the financial stability I had been unable to secure since I had to leave the Civil Service; and in that same year the urge to take up the task of *real education* for myself took shape.

My work as a traveller in ladies' garments was very easy. As I have said, the garments were so costly that I only had to sell a few to earn more than enough to keep me handsomely, and I had oceans of spare time to devote to my new studies and interests. I did not keep these a secret from my employer, who took quite a fatherly interest in my intellectual exploits and respected me greatly for them. His view was that so long as I did my work for him satisfactorily, I was free to do just what I liked with myself otherwise; so that he saw no reason why I should not leave off at 4 p.m., for instance, if I wanted to, so long as I had done what I had to do that day. The only snag was when I had to go away to the provinces for him, which took place occasionally. Those days and weeks spent travelling about the country were the dreariest in my career, even though I stayed at the best hotels, went everywhere first-class and had lavish expenses at my disposal. The "life" of the commercial traveller (even of the highest grade, as I could now classify myself) was unutterably dull and tedious to me, when not downright repulsive; especially as it kept me away from my evening studies, which had now become the ruling passion of my existence. All the zest and interest previously thrown into jazz, football, and so forth, were now centred in economics, philosophy, psychology, music and literature, and I had no thought for anything else, least of all dawdling away my time in the lounges of provincial hotels, or going to the local music-hall or theatre. (Cinemas were now out of the question, my sight was so bad!)

But often my boss offered to go away to the provinces for me, leaving me in charge of the office and showroom, as he

liked that sort of life very much indeed, and it was a welcome change for him. Thus we were both fully satisfied, and I always got the full commission on all orders he took for me when away. (By this time I was on a salary and commission basis, not just commission only. That had proved too costly to him after a time!) The same thing used to happen when we were showing at the large ladies'-wear exhibitions in London. We always had a stand there, and my boss would leave me in charge at the office and spend his days at the show, because he loved doing that sort of thing, especially as we always had some extra-smart mannequins on those occasions, and he liked to associate socially with smartly groomed and elegant young women. He used to 'phone me up during the day from these exhibitions and say "so-and-so" has been in and given an order for so many pounds, someone else for so much, etc., and all orders from my own customers or new ones in my territory were booked to me, so that I sat back and did nothing and the cash just rolled in! This arrangement suited me admirably with the new interests I had, so that I often blessed the fate that turned my steps in the direction of Wardour Street on that spring day in 1921. It certainly was a turning-point in my career!

At Toynbee Hall I had the good fortune to have C. E. M. Joad as my tutor in philosophy and English literature, and spent five years under him with the greatest benefit to myself. In those days he was quite a young man and never dreamt of the fame he was to achieve on the "Brains Trust" on the B.B.C. in later life. My brother, who also went to Toynbee Hall when I did, took a dislike to Joad from the start, saying that he suspected he was a bit of a *poseur*; but I at first was greatly impressed with him because of his obvious brilliant intellectual gifts. However, after a few months I began to see that my brother's view was correct, because it was becoming clearer and clearer that it was a sort of philosophical game that Joad was playing with us in our class, and that he, as an individual, had no really deep and vital

beliefs to express or defend at all. During his lectures he could take any point of view he wanted to, and make it sound very logical and plausible; and he could do this with the most opposing and contradictory theories.

Of course it is only right for a teacher of philosophy to put forward the views of any philosophical system he is expounding to the best of his ability, for the benefit of the students, and afterwards let them pick flaws in it if they can. But I am referring to something deeper. In my study of philosophy I was looking for something that could explain life to me, and act as a guide and director of conduct. In other words, I was looking for *a real philosophy of living*, and not mere intellectual exercise, as I soon found academic philosophy to be. And Joad could not supply what I was seeking. It seemed that there was *no real basic belief or faith in anything* in him, which he was prepared to defend with passionate conviction, as the occasion should demand. He could take up and expound any type of view or theory that he wanted to with apparent sincerity, because there was nothing *inside him* to offer any interference. (At least, so it appeared to me.) It was this apparent lack of a fundamental philosophy of life of his own, which I sensed, in one who taught philosophy, that was the main reason why I later came to dislike Joad as a man, although still retaining a profound admiration for him as a thinker and tutor. In later years Joad did expound his own philosophical views in his books; but they were purely intellectual and theoretical, and, as far as I could see, existed as a mere set of ideas in *his mind*, without any obvious connection with his own plan of living; so that our early instinctive recognition of this fact on the part of my brother and myself was finally corroborated.

When Joad was on the "Brains Trust" I often used to laugh to myself to hear the same facile views and arguments he used to put forward in my Toynbee Hall days coming out again and again in his answers to the questions posed by the

question-master. For years and years Joad had been a past-master in dealing with so many widely divergent viewpoints and theories in his classes that it was the simplest thing in the world for him to do the same thing before the microphone (and often in the same words!) as he used to do over twenty-five years previously at Toynbee, when I was one of his students! But that did not detract from the fact that he was undoubtedly the star performer on the "Brains Trust," and after his departure it was never the same again.

The philosophy I learnt under Joad, then, did not satisfy me because it was too rhetorical and intellectual, and had very little indeed to do with life. I wanted a philosophy that fitted into life as I saw it, and could explain things to me in terms I could understand. It seemed that academic philosophy could do no such thing. It was just mental gymnastics—a very clever and fascinating game or diversion for those who liked that sort of thing; but not for me. I had to laugh one day when something seemed to upset Joad and it looked rather as though he might be going to lose his temper. One of the students said to me: "Fancy a philosopher even seeming to lose his temper. I should have thought he was above those things!" This young man had assumed a knowledge of academic philosophy as being equivalent to a *deep philosophical understanding of life itself*, with its tolerant and good-humoured attitude to everyday events as being of little real consequence to the tranquil soul within. Many people make the same mistake that this young man did, and that is why a lecturer on philosophy is taken as being a man with a real understanding of life *and its purpose*, and with a rightly orientated outlook on all worldly events. Nothing could be further from the truth, and as soon as I realised this I had to begin to look elsewhere for the vital truths I was seeking.

All the same, I deeply enjoyed my years under Joad at Toynbee Hall, and derived a great deal of valuable information from them. In the realm of English literature Joad was instrumental in making me conversant with the work of many

authors I have learnt since to admire and respect; and not least he got me interested in W. H. Hudson, the great naturalist and writer about Nature and the life of the countryside. I derived real spiritual nourishment from Hudson's books, and still do to this day; and it was partly his influence that made me make up my mind to take up country walks and rambles, although other factors played their part in this decision too. One was the fact that Joad himself used to go walking with his rucksack, and sometimes came to our classes with his country rig on, so that this whetted my interest in walking. Another factor was the rambles that were organised by certain sections of the students at Toynbee, but which I myself never went on. I did not like going out with crowds, and still do not; and it seemed to me then (and still does now) that to go walking in the country, for the peace and quietness it brings to the soul, with a whole mob of people, is a contradiction in terms. If it is a question of mere exercise it is another matter; but country walking means far more than exercise to me.

I have often seen such droves of young men and women busily engaged in chatter and laughter as they go on country walks together, and whenever I come across such a group I make haste out of the way. If they like that sort of thing, good luck to them; but for me it is just anathema to despoil the quietness of the country with noise and chattering.

When I had been at my new job for just over a year I thought it was time I had a holiday—the first real holiday I had had in my life since the one I described in the last chapter. I had begun a holiday at Ramsgate in 1914, at a boarding-house one of our relatives had just started there, but the outbreak of the war sadly upset all our plans, and I had to return home after only three or four days. The boarding-house itself had to close down, with considerable financial loss to my relatives. So it was in 1922 that I took my first holiday on my own, and went down to Shanklin in the Isle of Wight for a week. I remember the occasion vividly



because it was here that I made my first venture into the country as a walker, a practice I have kept up ever since.

It happened in this way: I had only arrived that afternoon, and in the evening I went out to some gardens where a band was playing and people were sitting or walking about aimlessly. I sat down myself for a short while but soon felt utterly bored with it all; I felt an unutterable revulsion against the whole scene and what it connoted, and forthwith got up and went out into the darkness. I just began to walk about the lanes nearby, then discovered a stile and footpath and ventured upon this, and before I knew it I was on my first solo country walk! It was dark, but I enjoyed the quietness and peace of it all immensely, and regarded it as a heavenly change from the atmosphere I had just left.

When I returned home to the guest house at which I was staying, my mind was made up. For the rest of my week I was going to walk about the island as much as I could, and spend my holiday in that way. I did not mind being alone at all; in fact being alone has always suited my nature best, although I like the company of other people too. But walking I always enjoy most when quite by myself, and the more my walk takes me to out-of-the-way places and remote corners, where one hardly sees a soul all day, the better. I always seem to get something from the loneliness and peace of it all that nothing else can provide; and being with other people on such occasions always interferes with that feeling of inner sustenance and satisfaction.

The Isle of Wight is an ideal place for walking, and I have spent many enjoyable days there since in walking over and round it, along its many footpaths and tracks and narrow winding lanes. As soon as I returned home from my holiday I got some of those small rambling books published by "Walker Miles" which used to be on sale in those days, chiefly in second-hand bookshops such as Foyles in Charing Cross Road. I remembered the youthful walk I had had from Dorking to Leith Hill and back with my would-be author

friend, and as his ramble had been copied out of one of "Walker Miles' " books, I thought he was the best man to follow as a beginner in the craft. For country walking is a craft; make no mistake about that. One has to learn how to conduct a ramble over footpath and field-track and through the woods and wild places, even with the aid of an ordnance survey inch-to-the-mile map. And being a novice I naturally wanted some guidance in the matter, which "Walker Miles " fully provided. I shall never forget my indebtedness to that man, and can thank him for some of the happiest hours of my life.

The *nom de plume* "Walker Miles" covered the identity of Edmund Seyfang Taylor, an old-fashioned type of Englishman with a deep love of the countryside, and a passion for walking, who had a printing business in the City of London at the turn of the century. Taylor became a pioneer of country walking, and hit on the idea of writing down his rambles and printing them in book form, in his own works, for sale at the very moderate price of 1s. He covered a very wide area around London in his walks, and I myself possess many of his little books, dealing with field-path rambles in Surrey, Kent and Sussex; and he certainly knew how to pick out the beauty-spots for those who followed in his footsteps—both literally and metaphorically! At his death Taylor was buried at Godstone in Surrey, where he lived, and there is a monument erected in the churchyard, over his grave, marking the appreciation and deep thanks of a large number of walking enthusiasts whom Taylor had encouraged to take to the countryside for enjoyment and exercise.

I have already said that my own interest in walking was not just for mere exercise, although I certainly do enjoy that aspect of it immensely, having been more ready to walk anywhere than ride, even as a boy. But I found in the country something my soul had been seeking vainly, for many years, amidst the busy streets of London, and which of course was quite unobtainable there. That was a feeling of deep peace

and communion with Nature, which my walks soon provided me with. I found that I only had to go out on a Sunday and in an hour or two all the cares of the week had been swept away, and the mind was refreshed and invigorated as well as the body; whilst deep within something else was being refreshed and invigorated too. It was this latter which provided the most important return from my walking experiences. I had never before known what it was to be alone with Nature, and in the silence and solitude of a country walk, far removed from civilisation, I found at last that inner peace which I had been restlessly seeking for many years previously, although I had never been aware of the fact. I did not know I had been seeking until I found what I sought. That is the same with many of us in life. We feel there is a lack of something within us, which makes us dissatisfied with life in general; but we do not know what that lack is until we find it (if we do). Then we recognise what we have been missing by the sudden change our discovery has brought to our inner consciousness.

I have spent thousands of days and walked many thousands of miles over the English countryside since my first venture in walking; and my zest and interest are still as keen as ever. Walking certainly does not pall on me, and I enjoy it just as much whether it is winter or summer, spring or autumn. Each season has its own special pleasures and delights for the walker's heart, and not even snow or fog or rain often deter me. I soon established the habit of going out every Sunday and spent some delectable days walking over the Surrey and Kent countryside, with the aid of my "Walker Miles" books. But should I lose my way, as sometimes happened, I was completely stuck, as I was unable to complete the ramble as directed in the book! I therefore made myself conversant with the one-inch-to-the-mile Ordnance Survey maps of the Home Counties, so that with their aid I could carry out any walk I had started on, without floundering about like a lost sheep, should any of "Walker Miles'" direc-

tions be either misunderstood or prove impossible to follow (through alterations since the rambles were written down). Once I was able to use the inch-to-the-mile maps properly, thanks to the tuition I had by that time received from the "Walker Miles" books, I was able to map out my own rambles over the countryside, and thus greatly increase the scope of my walks. But I shall appreciate the early guidance and inspiration received from these little books for the rest of my life. They have earned an abiding place in my heart because of the great joy and deep satisfaction I have derived from them.

My country walks soon led me to admire the old villages and houses, churches, etc., and thus fostered a love for architecture which was a further interest to my rambles. I also grew to know the various countryside birds and flowers, and my country lore in general increased as the years passed. Thus a never-failing group of interests was brought into being by my new hobby, and I keep on adding to the list as the years pass, because there is always something new about country life to interest one, should one be really attracted by the soil, the trees, the birds, and the human beings who make the country their home.

Before I became a vegetarian and Food Reformer it was very simple to stay the night (or several nights) at some old country inn or hotel, on a walking tour (something I soon began to indulge in as I became more experienced!) because I did not mind what I ate so long as it tasted all right. But in later years my problems increased considerably on this point, and it took some time and trouble to evolve a suitable plan of action whereby I could still stay in the country during my more extended week-end or holiday rambles, yet get the sort of food I then wanted (as far as that was possible). However, where the need is, the way to a solution is soon forthcoming, should the urge be strong enough, and eventually I got on almost as well as formerly, although I could no longer take "pot-luck," and had to pick and choose my meals

according to my newer knowledge of reformed dietetics.

In my "unregenerate" days I remember many occasions when I had arrived at some inn or hotel either wet through or cold, or very tired or hungry (or all these together on occasion), and revelled in a nice wash or bath, and seat before a cosy fire, followed later by what was to me then a delectable meal of, say, ham and eggs, or steak and chips, with rhubarb pie or apple tart and cream, with plenty of tea or coffee on the side, and white bread *ad lib*! In later years I had to be content with less carnivorous and toxin-forming fare, and when possible always took a good supply of fruit with me to supplement any meals I should have to have that were not what I thought really well balanced. I often found the best solution was to have, say, a couple of boiled eggs and toast for breakfast at the inn or hotel, then just fruit whilst out walking for lunch, and in the evening try to get a salad meal of some kind at the place where I was spending the night. That balanced up the meals for the day quite all right.

But in those early walking days I ate anything and everything, and would stop at any inn or hotel for midday lunch on a Sunday, never thinking of taking that meal with me to eat *al fresco*, as I learnt to do later on. For such an outdoor meal I found apples and sandwiches of wholemeal bread and cheese very suitable, and later still always took a fruit and milk lunch with me, having a large salad meal when I got home at night. I always felt that during a good day's walk I could do with a country tea, no matter what my midday meal might have consisted of; and I still do have tea out, no matter if (on occasion) it is white bread and shop jam and cake. I feel that it makes a pleasant break in the day's outing, and the tea, which I always have with lots of hot water and milk, can do very little harm, even though it might be quite strong in the pot. If a Food Reformer cannot get away with a meal like that once a week, after a walk of perhaps sixteen or more miles, there must be something radically wrong with him in my view!

I soon got to know all the best tea-places on the various routes I used to take, and often looked forward to the pleasure of having tea at one of them, especially in summer, if there was a tea-garden attached. There is always something very attractive in sitting out of doors eating, with the birds and trees and sun and sky for company. Often such meals and pleasant reflections are marred by noisy parties who happen to arrive on the scene, but one has to accept those things, just as one has to accept noisy motorists, motorcyclists, and other despoilers of the peace of the countryside in this age of speed and noise (and smell). (The aeroplane is now the greatest nuisance in the country as regards noise.)

After I had been walking a few years I got to know the best places to visit at certain times of the year for woodland primroses and violets, wild daffodils, bluebells, apple and other fruit blossom, and so on, and would go to these special spots at the appropriate time to revel in the sight and scent of the flowers and the scenes of massed beauty they composed. (Incidentally, I never pick wild flowers; I would much sooner see them grow.) I knew a small wood in Kent that in the bluebell season in May was a packed mass of bluebells from end to end, so that the trees in it seemed to be swimming in a sea of bloom that varied in colour from mauve or purple to dark blue, according to the sun and light and shade. I also knew places where gorgeous stretches of magenta and purple heather were to be seen in August, and the best shows of autumnal beech leaves in October and November, and I always knew where to look for the first snowdrops of the year in an old Surrey churchyard not far from Guildford. Such pictorial memories keep crowding into my mind as I write, and it is difficult to convey to the reader what such experiences can mean to one who grows to love the country and all that it stands for.

I always liked to walk through the woods and where there were plenty of trees, and to this day it greatly upsets me to see them being cut down, especially beautiful and stately

ones like old beech trees or oaks. I regard the beech as the most majestic of trees, the one that looks loveliest in early May with its fresh green, and most beautiful in the autumn with its red-gold canopy. One of the saddest sights in the country these days is to see how woods and copses have been ruthlessly felled to make up for the timber shortage caused by the war.

As well as knowing the best places to go to for the flowers and trees (oh, those Kentish orchards in late April and early May with their miles of fruit blossom!) I always made a point of going through the hop-fields during the hop-picking season, for the fun of seeing the Cockneys who come down for the picking at their labours or frolics (often both intermingled). They certainly made a real holiday of their sojourn in the hop fields, and most of the money they earned went in the local inns which were jammed to the doors with clients, especially on Sunday, which was visiting day from relatives and friends at home who had come down to see the pickers and spend a few hours with them. I have seen crowds coming out of these little country inns at closing time with bottles of beer in their pockets as well as in their hands, determined to continue their jubilations in the hop-fields and the old shacks provided by the owners of the fields for the pickers to sleep in. The small grocery stores in the vicinity were always raided by crowds of hoppers on Saturday night for eatables for the week, and I have seen fights going on because someone took some bacon which someone else had seen first, etc! I always enjoyed these September jaunts through the hop districts, as there is something irrepressible about the Cockney which infects everyone and everything he or she comes in contact with. They certainly do enjoy life in their own way!

During my country walks I always kept an ear open for the migrants coming over in early spring, and always expected to hear the chiff-chaff towards the end of March, followed shortly after by the willow-warbler, and then, about April

14th, by the cuckoo. I have heard the cuckoo a day or two earlier than that some years, but generally reckon April 14th as the day for his arrival in southern England. The nightingale usually arrives about April 21st (although I have heard him several days earlier on occasion), with the white-throat, black-cap and garden warbler about the same time, followed by the swallows and swifts and martins just after. I am no ornithologist and know nothing much about bird-lore, but through the years I have established these dates for myself, and it is surprising how regularly the visitors from overseas keep to their schedule. It is uncanny really.

It was a great surprise to me at first to discover that the nightingale sings just as much during the day as he does at night, from the time of his arrival until the first week in June; and at Chingford, on the edge of Epping Forest, I have heard more nightingales congregated together than at any other spot, singing away for dear life, with the multitudes of London day-trippers in the vicinity not realising in the slightest what sort of bird it was that was creating so melodious a background for them. If they had known they were nightingales they would doubtless have stood and listened in awed admiration (as so many other folk do when they are told a nightingale is singing), but as they did not know what the birds were the impassioned trilling was quite ignored by the crowds present. There is a great deal of snobbishness connected with the singing of the nightingale; it is the custom to esteem its song as better than that of any other bird, because it sings at night (with its attendant mystery), has such a wide range of notes, and utters its song with such deep emotion. But many of its notes are harsh and guttural, and I personally prefer the blackbird for real sweetness and melody. Having been kept awake at night by nightingales in May, the novelty of hearing them has long worn off, and although I still love to listen to them, I do not feel quite that same hushed awe which some people seem to think appropriate when hearing the nightingale in song. On any sunny day



on or about the 1st of April I expect to see the first brimstone butterfly fluttering along in the sunshine looking for all the world like an extra large primrose that has suddenly taken wing.

After some years of walking experience one gets to like certain areas or places better than others, and my own special favourite is the Midhurst area in South-west Sussex (with the country round Tunbridge Wells as runner-up). I like the district around Midhurst best because it seems to suit me best, and because there is such a wide diversity of scenery thereabouts to make one's walk varied and constantly interesting to the eye. The South Downs have their special appeal too, with their close-clipped thyme-scented springy turf, the rise and fall of the lark's song, and their wide-openness; a pleasant change after a week cooped up in town. As I now live right at the foot of the Downs I see far more of them than I ever used to, and they still exert their old fascination for me, although I now prefer the wooded downland areas to those that are quite bare and windswept. The wooded Chilterns have their own particular appeal, too, especially when the beeches are just coming into leaf or in the autumn when the woods are a feast of colour; and I have spent many happy days exploring Epping Forest and the New Forest, as well as Dartmoor, Exmoor and other of the wilder areas of the English countryside. But mountainous country does not attract me much. I always prefer the simple quiet fields and woods, with their feel of eternity about them, which provides such a wonderful background to the life of our agricultural population, as they carry on their daily tasks providing us with the food we need. The growing crops in summer, with their red poppies, blue cornflowers, and other coloured wild flowerets, all waving together gently in the breeze, in rhythm and unison with the corn, oats or barley, are a never-failing pleasure, as are the stately old elms and well-favoured barns and farm buildings. There is nothing to equal the sights and scenes of the country, in my own view, for that real pleasure

of the heart which gives us the deepest satisfaction in living.

When I first took up walking I possessed one great asset that I did not quite realise at the time. That was an excellent sense of direction. Without that no one can really become a skilled Rambler, as one has constantly to keep one's whereabouts in mind, and that is not always easy, even with a map and compass. But I had the requisite directional sense all ready waiting to be used, so was rather fortunate there. I also possessed a very good memory for places, and could recognise landmarks of various kinds, which perhaps I had only seen once or twice before, when approaching them from quite a different direction to that previously taken. This also helped me greatly, but even so I must confess to getting lost many times during my walks, with no seeming way out of my entanglement. At such times I always called on something inside me to help me find a way out, and it invariably did so. Some people might call this superstition, and say it was all just luck; but I prefer to think otherwise. When I remember certain unpleasant situations I have been in, I can only regard the fact that I got out all right as inspired from a higher source. I had the faith to believe I would get out all right, and called on this inner power to direct my steps; *and it did.* (It still does, when I am in a tight spot.)

Country walking has taken up such a considerable portion of my life since I first started it in 1922 that the reader must pardon me if I get rather enthusiastic and allow myself to get carried away by the theme. But I do this in order to try to infuse the reader with some of my own enthusiasm, for if he too should begin to take up country walking he will never regret doing so. (That is if he has a decent pair of feet!) In my own opinion there is nothing to equal it for a recreation for body, mind and spirit. It is ridiculously cheap, too, when one considers what such things as smoking, drinking, and the cinema cost these days. A few shillings for a glorious day out in the country is surely a worth-while investment from all angles? It is nice to see so many people taking to the coun-

try these days by car or cycle, but if you want to get the real *feel* of the earth and growing things, you *must* go the field-path way; and that means walking! (My brother also took up rambling as a result of my own experiences, and I sometimes went out with him and his fiancée, but mostly I went alone.)

At Toynbee I studied Economics under Arthur Greenwood, who later became a Labour M.P. and member of the Labour Cabinet; and through my study of the subject, and the prevailing view at Toynbee, became a "Socialist" (in theory of course, like all Socialists). However, as the years passed I came to see the underlying fallacy in Socialism and all other panaceas which purport to bring about a modern Utopia by means of the ballot-box and economic reform; and I shall have more to say on this topic later, as it is a most important one these days. I also studied Political Science under Harold Laski at Morley College, and later made a tentative attempt to join the Fabian Society. But I soon discovered it was nothing more than a "talking shop" where people aired their views, and made plans and told others what they ought to do, and then went home and did quite otherwise in their own personal lives. So I dropped that! I was searching for something that was not just a set of mental ideas, *but a way of life*. Socialism and political theories were unable to supply me with that.

During all this time my sight continued to get progressively worse, despite the fact that I had given up clerical work, on the specialist's advice, so that I found it impossible to study many of the text-books I was supposed to read in my various classes. But I found this a help rather than a hindrance, strange as it may seem. It enabled my mind to formulate many of its own ideas on the subjects in question, and not have it saddled with a number of well-worn theories and ready-made principles that were supposed to be what everyone should think. Later still I found I could not read at all. If I attempted to read for five minutes I got such a pain in

my head that further reading was quite impossible. So from about 1923-26 I did practically no reading of any kind, except to put down my orders in my order-book, and look at the headlines in the papers, etc. But this enforced abstention from reading proved to be a blessing in disguise, although at the time I thought it was the most dreadful of impositions, in view of my love of books. Not being able to do any reading left my mind free to act as the medium for the development of *my own ideas* on a wide variety of subjects, as they welled up into consciousness from my own inner being. In other words, this ban on reading gave my intuition an opportunity it had long been seeking to get into my superficial consciousness many things which it wanted me to know and which previously it had been unable to get me to discern because my mind was cluttered up with all that I had been reading and learning.

That is *the danger* of intellectualism. We study books, dozens of them, about a certain subject or set of subjects, and imagine we are learning a great deal; but what we are doing is merely to fill our minds with a lot of ballast which is really of very little practical value to us, unless it is something in the nature of applied science or languages we are learning about. This danger is particularly strong in subjects such as philosophy, psychology, economics, etc., and I was thus spared from all that mental paralysis (for such it really becomes by virtue of its numbing effect on the brain) by not being able to read. I did not see it in that light at the time, of course, and deeply envied those of my fellow-students who were always borrowing books from the course library; and it was only later that I appreciated what my enforced period of abstention from reading had done for me. It came just at the right time, when I was imbibing all these new ideas, with their attendant danger of mental indigestion (which so many of my fellow-students suffered from in their eagerness to learn). I was prevented from falling a victim to this prevailing malady through the necessary rest period (for mental

digestion and assimilation) provided by my inability to read. The ideas I obtained during my lectures were therefore given plenty of time to soak in, and, what is more important, *my own ideas* were allowed to emerge from my inner consciousness and take shape in my mind, in conjunction with, or in contra-distinction to, the ideas presented by my lecturers. Thus all this not-reading business was invaluable to me at a crisis point in my life, because it encouraged me to think for myself, and not allow myself to be just a passive agent and allow my mind to be swamped by what I had heard or read.

I soon discovered that the great majority of my fellow-students were in this latter condition all the time. Everything they said was merely the repetition of something they had heard or read, and when it came to writing essays it was taken for granted that they would merely set down a sort of *résumé* of what they had been learning or reading, without any ideas of their own on the subject. I remember that sometimes when we students discussed things amongst ourselves, more than one said to me in a tone of surprise: "Oh, so you have you own ideas" (as if this was something entirely novel and startling). Once when I did an essay for Joad, he came over to me and complimented me on it, and said: "Did you get those views from a book by Bertrand Russell on the subject?" When I replied that I had read no books at all on the subject, and that the ideas expressed were my own (such as they were), he too looked quite surprised. Evidently that sort of thing was not done in W.E.A. classes!

As a student of an advanced psychology class at the Mary Ward Settlement in Tavistock Square, I was set to do a paper on the Press. Bearing in mind my views on the subject as expressed earlier in this chapter, the reader can understand that this suited me very well indeed. But the tutor thought she would give me some kindly advice and told me to read a book by Walter Lippmann which she said would help me to formulate my ideas. When I said I already had my own ideas on the subject, she too looked very surprised, and left

it at that. When I did the paper she complimented me warmly on it and said it was very good indeed and most original (and a little alarming, I fear, judging from her attitude)!

Thus not being able to read provided me with much to be thankful for in those formative years, although at the time it was the blackest tragedy to me, as I realised that my sight was in danger of failing altogether. But the crisis was not to come for a few years longer, and at the time I was content to carry on as I was doing, and made up for my lack of reading by going to concerts, the opera and serious drama all I could. All the fervour previously thrown into jazz music now went into classical music and opera, and I frequented the Queen's Hall during the "Prom" season several nights a week as my place of business was now in Great Portland Street, just around the corner. I cannot say that I took to classical music as a duck to water. Some of it I already knew, of course, and liked immensely; but Bach, for instance, was a sore trial—until somehow I seemed suddenly to get the hang of it, and in time grew to regard Bach as my greatest favourite. I soon began to develop my own views on classical music and came to the conclusion that trying to express actual ideas through sound was quite wrong. Music should express moods and emotions, and conjure up visions of beauty and even ecstasy for the mind and spirit; but it could not and should not try to formulate ideas such as "programme music" tried to do. That was best left to the writer and poet. Music had its own special sphere, I thought, as the muse of the *feeling and aspirational* part of us, and it should be left at that. Although I grew to be very fond of Wagner's music, his operas I found much too heavy for me, and I liked best those of Puccini. I know this is very "lowbrow," but that was how I felt, and that was all there was to it. After all, I paid my money at Covent Garden to enjoy myself, not to sit for hours listening to a lot of heavy stuff that made me more and more fidgety and bored as the opera wore on. *Madam*

*Butterfly* was my great favourite, and I never tired of seeing it.

I grew into the habit of spending one night every week at the Old Vic, and saw many of Shakespeare's plays there, and I also frequented the Everyman Theatre at Hampstead, where Shaw's plays were given over an extended season. I saw some of Eugene O'Neill's plays there too. Galsworthy and Tchekov I also liked as dramatists, but of them all I admired Shaw most. His plays were an unfailing delight to me, as were also his books, and for some years I was certainly a "Shaw" fan of the worst type. Later I began to see that although he was a great man and a great creative thinker, he fell short of what I was looking for, although he could still make me admire his wit and skill to the uttermost. Wells I had no time for at all as a thinker, although he was my brother's favourite. I saw in Wells the epitome of that *scientific attitude to life* which thought all human problems could be solved through reason, science and logic. *If we only thought hard enough we could reach our destination!* Nothing could be further from the truth, and it was because Shaw was not in this "scientific worshipping" camp (whose high priest was Wells) that I admired him so much at the time. He saw that life was something that transcended logic and could not be solved like a mathematical problem, as Wells thought it could!

It was indeed due to Wells that I had an experience which was a definite turning-point in my mental and spiritual development during these years of expanding mental and spiritual horizons, but I shall leave the telling of it to the next chapter. I feel I must now draw this present chapter to a close, with the hope that the reader will see it not as a jumbled mass of isolated events, as the telling of it may seem to imply, but as the welding together of a pattern of living which I had evolved for myself during the years after 1921, when I first began to take in hand my own *self-education*. All the various interests and activities I was engaged in at

that time were different aspects of my inner thirst for understanding and self-expression, and during the course of time I gradually felt myself becoming the possessor of what I had been seeking all along: *a definite philosophy of living* which could explain life to me and provide me with a code of conduct with which to chart my course through the troubled seas of existence. I had set out to find such a philosophy, and, not discovering it in the classes I attended, I had perforce to evolve it for myself from myself, which my enforced abstention from reading enabled me to do. Having evolved that philosophy of living (however crudely) I soon discovered that others also had the same ideas as I had. But I had to hammer out my own ideas on the subject first, it seemed. *Then* I found what I had been seeking in others who till that time were outside my ken. The next chapter will explain what I mean.



### CHAPTER III

## EVOLVING MY OWN PHILOSOPHY OF LIVING

DURING all these years I had always discussed my ideas and views about things in general with my brother, many of them to do with religion, immortality, etc. Neither of us could accept the narrow dogmatism of Judæism, and it was only natural that we should gravitate towards the rationalism which is such a common feature of our intellectual age. But rationalism could never satisfy me, and although I felt that the Bible was unacceptable in any literal sense, I yet discerned in it something more than mere myth or fable. I felt that there was such a thing as religious faith, but so far had found nothing to which to attach it.

It was at this stage that my brother lent me Wells' book *The Soul of a Bishop*, in which Wells sets forth his views about religion, death, immortality, etc., all from a strictly rationalistic and scientific point of view. Wells' idea that the only immortality we can ever know is that which we enjoy by virtue of being members of the human race left me quite cold. I could not accept it at all. It was not the slightest comfort or consolation to me to know that when I was dead other human beings would be carrying on the torch of life, and that in them my own immortality lay. I could never accept this idea as the real answer to the problem, and I suspected that Wells did not either. He only put it forward as a "mental concept" to satisfy the logical part of his mind, but it left the real inner man quite cold and uncomfortable, because it had no relation to real feeling of any kind.

This question of immortality continued to occupy my thoughts very considerably, therefore, and I saw that even Shaw had no solution to the problem, although his conception of the *Life Force* was one with which I was in agree-

ment as far as it went. But it, too, seemed only a logical concept to fit into a pre-arranged intellectual system of thought, and had no relation to real inner feeling or belief. It was whilst in this frame of mind that I went down to Canterbury to spend the week-end walking about the neighbourhood, which I liked very much because of its mixture of hills, orchards and farmland, old villages and churches, etc. I remember that on the evening of my arrival there was a remarkable sunset, and as I watched it I felt a great sadness come over me, quite different from what I would expect to feel on such an occasion. I returned to my hotel and went to bed still feeling this strange sadness, but next morning when I awoke it had apparently gone. I went out on my ramble after breakfast, and whilst sitting resting in a field, observing the beauty of the scene, and the lovely sunshine turning every growing thing into a green flame lit from within by an inner radiance, I suddenly had a strange feeling come over me. A thought seemed to burst into my consciousness that *death was an illusion; that life was indestructible; and that the real life inside us never died, only the body did.*

At first sight there may seem nothing very unusual in all this. After all, all religions claim that the soul is immortal and never dies, only the body does. But it is one thing to know this intellectually, or accept it on trust, as it were, cloaked in the trappings of ritualism and sacerdotalism, and quite another to feel it as a living, burning truth within one, free from all orthodox religious accretions. It was this which I now felt, quite suddenly, and with a tremendous conviction which suffused my whole being with an immense joy. It was this joy which was the really remarkable thing about the whole experience. I had never felt anything like it before, it was so overpowering and transcendental. I felt that the whole world shared in my exaltation, and everything seemed to have taken on a brighter and more vivid hue. The sunshine, which hitherto had been quite powerful, seemed to get even stronger and more piercing, and the light all round seemed

to have increased in brilliance severalfold. In short, everything seemed for the moment to have become transfigured, including myself, and the effect of this whole experience was profound in the extreme. It was an unforgettable moment, and it lives on as vividly as ever in my memory. I can still recall it all, although it happened over a quarter of a century ago.

I received this (what I can only call mystical) experience about noon, and the feeling of supreme joy accompanying it continued with me for the rest of the day. I remember that as I sat in the train coming home from Canterbury that evening, I could think of nothing else but it, and everything in the musty carriage seemed lit up by the radiance I still could recapture of the scene passed through. This feeling of delirious exultation and supreme joy faded by the next morning, and I await the next time I shall experience it all again as another red-letter day in my life. Because I know it was a definite initiatory episode in the life history of my soul, and when I am ready for the next step forward in inner illumination I shall have the same feelings to accompany it. (Of course since then I have advanced greatly in my inner knowledge and have understood much that then was unknown to me; but the illumination I experienced that day in my inner consciousness was the cause of that widening of spiritual wisdom and understanding which followed hot-foot on it, and has continued to this day. The next time I feel the same tumultuous joy and inner illumination, I know it will be the precursor of yet wider and deeper spiritual wisdom and understanding that will go far beyond what my mind can now comprehend.)

On my return home I told my brother about my remarkable experience during my week-end stay at Canterbury, and he was greatly interested, naturally. From then on I used to have all kinds of thoughts and ideas come into my mind, widening the brief initial concept of life and immortality which accompanied my experience. Always before any such

thoughts or ideas came up into consciousness I felt that same sadness which I had experienced on the night before the burst of illumination, when looking at the sunset. I still feel that same thing to this day, when ideas are germinating inside me, before coming up into full consciousness; although sometimes it is more akin to a feeling of bodily *malaise*. There is a sort of bodily "unwellness," if such a word can be coined, and then, when the new idea or ideas have shot up into consciousness, this strange feeling disappears, to be followed by a sense of deep pleasure and relief, as though some act of inner creation had been achieved (but never that supreme joy which accompanied the initial illumination).

Soon after I had had the experience related, I came across something of Nietzsche, and to my surprised delight discovered that he, too, accepted the idea that life was primordial, eternal and indestructible, and that only the form it inhabited and expressed itself through died. Thus life and death were not opposites, as generally assumed, *but birth and death were*. This was something totally different, to those who understood, because it implied that the inner core of oneself never died, although the outer covering did, and that this inner core would keep on expressing itself in new forms throughout eternity.

I also found that Walt Whitman had precisely the same viewpoint, which formed one of the central themes of his poems, and the same with Edward Carpenter. In short, I began to be drawn into contact with quite a number of writers or thinkers who also saw this question of life and death as I did, to my great delight; but it was only when I had made the initial discovery *for myself* that this confirmation and corroboration from other sources came. I feel this is always so with the deeper truths of existence. If we read about them as part of other people's experiences or thoughts, they impress themselves on our consciousness only very superficially. But when we have ourselves gone through the very same things they are writing about, then what they say car-

ries with it an immeasurably greater value and significance in every way. It confirms us in our own experience, and reinforces our conviction in its truth, because other people have experienced the very same thing.

However, all these thoughts and ideas were at the time only in the nascent stage; they had yet to be developed and made really concrete. I was quite unable to do any real reading at the time and my thoughts and ideas just simmered inside me, awaiting an opportunity for fuller development. I still kept on with my University Extension Classes, and a year or so later came into touch with someone at Toynbee who had started a class there which dealt with the very problems I myself had been tackling in my amateurish way. I learnt a very great deal indeed from that class, and discovered that what had filled me with so much joy on that memorable occasion was quite a common experience among certain mystics, poets, writers and thinkers, and the whole course of lectures was devoted to just those very kind of people, and their personal philosophies, as expressed in their books. Imagine my delight at this! I discovered thereby the names of many to whom in later years I could turn for more light on my own inner problems, not the least of them D. H. Lawrence, about whom I shall have more to say later as a greatly misunderstood genius and creative thinker.

The band of men who formed the subject-matter of that course of lectures seemed a very ill-assorted company on the surface, but they had a common bond which united them, as made clear by the lecturer, and that was the acceptance of *life* as the fundamental factor in the universe. To them life (or consciousness) was the cause and creator of the multitudinous forms it inhabited, and was just as indestructible in its realm as matter is in *its* own realm; and the "scientific" idea that life is a sort of by-product of matter, and is dependent on it for its existence, was regarded by them as the idle vapouring of minds incapable of seeing the real grandeur of the cosmic creative process, because of their engrossment

in the purely material side of things. These men *accepted life* in the fullest meaning of the term, and regarded themselves as its instruments through which it could work for the furtherance of its ends—i.e., the ever fuller expression of *itself* through *them*.

As I had already discovered for myself, Walt Whitman, Edward Carpenter and Nietzsche were of that band, as also were George Fox (the founder of the Quakers), Goethe, William Blake, Dostoevsky, D. H. Lawrence and others. Shaw was included in the group, because of his espousal of the *Life Force*, as also the French philosopher Henri Bergson, because of his belief in the *Élan Vital*.

All in all I gained an immeasurable amount of assistance from this course of lectures. They served to clarify my mind on many vital points, and I saw that the views I held were shared by men of different religious beliefs as well as of no religious beliefs at all. Thus religion as a set of dogmatic principles based on a certain supposed revelation of divinely inspired truths had nothing to do with the viewpoint. One could therefore attempt to live one's life in accordance with what one felt to be the truth, without having to become part of a sect or association of individuals who all professed a certain set of beliefs in common.

This was a very satisfying piece of knowledge to me in my mental state at the time, as I had long since given up all thought of associating myself with any formal religion, yet could not accept rationalism or the complete negation of religion. As I saw it, I had become a devotee of a *religion of life*, wherein one accepted life as the fundamental factor in existence, as the creative source of everything, and as the force that kept everything in a state of being or becoming. One had the gift of life within one, and it was one's duty to oneself (as well as to that life within) to try to live one's life to the fullest extent possible, in order to gain the greatest possibility of creative self-expression. Thus one repaid the life within for having brought us into being, by trying to

make that life as productive in the creative sphere as one possibly could, and so carried on its own work of creation with oneself as its consciously co-operative creative channel.

Thus the more one could express oneself through one's work or activities, the more would one be doing one's duty to *life as a whole*. This was the rough idea that emerged in my mind, and it was a very good beginning for the philosophy which I later developed when I had become aware of other and more advanced stages along the same road that I was travelling in thought. After all, I was only twenty-seven or twenty-eight, and I had a lot to learn; but at least I had taken a first step along the path which I knew inside me was the right one for me to travel.

During all this time I still kept on my travelling job, despite the fact that my eyes continued to get worse and worse. It was rather ludicrous the way in which some of our clients would phone up and say: "I have a special order to give you, so send along Mr. Benjamin at once. He is the only one in your place who can take down anything difficult intelligently, and see that it is carried out properly!" This was a fact, and often caused me much amusement. My boss had other travellers besides myself, all of whom prided themselves on being "real men of the world" and all that sort of thing. But when it came to seeing that special orders somewhat out of the ordinary had to be attended to, they seemed quite incapable of supervising such tasks successfully. It was here that my mathematical training came in, and that is why for anything difficult our customers generally preferred me to attend to them. Needless to say, this sort of thing did not endear me to the other travellers, quite apart from the fact that I had no real interests in common with them; and the head traveller was always urging my boss to get rid of me and get a "real traveller" in my place. But my employer had a feeling of loyalty towards me (as well as that interest in my intellectual pursuits already mentioned), and he would never listen to what this chap had to say.

I quite agreed that I was "no traveller," and always told my boss that I never wished to be one. I was only one because of the state of my eyes, and for no other reason. If I could see better I would never have been a "commercial" for all the money in the world, I told him. At the same time, whenever one of the "real travellers" got into trouble of any kind, such as spending all his money (plus his expenses for the trip, and pawning some of his samples) because he had had a fling at the races and lost, it was generally I who had to go along and retrieve the situation (as far as it could be done). In fact, whenever there was a need to send anyone really trustworthy anywhere (and our samples could at times be worth thousands of pounds), it was soon apparent to my employer that I was the only one capable of doing the job satisfactorily. He knew he could trust me implicitly with everything, which was something he could not do with any of the other travellers.

Thus his loyalty to me was repaid on many occasions, and despite the fact that I was no traveller, I brought him many really first-class customers, some of them people he had wanted to get in with for years. So that on balance I felt I gave as much as I received, although going away to the provinces was still the great bugbear of my existence. I tried many subterfuges to delay or postpone doing this, on occasion, so as not to interfere with special classes or lectures, and one such happening always stands out in my mind.

My boss suddenly said to me one evening, just as I was going off to a special lecture: "Benjamin, I want you to go to Birmingham to-night, with some special samples. It is most important and you must go at once." When I asked if the morning would not do, he was emphatic that I must go right away, so I saw it was no use arguing with him. However, in my own mind I was determined I would not miss the lecture, which I had been looking forward to, and decided that I would get the first train from Euston to Birmingham in the morning, which got me there at 11 a.m. I decided that was



quite early enough as the place I was going to did not open before 10 a.m., and one hour did not make all that difference.

Accordingly I went to the lecture, after leaving my samples at Euston, and next morning arrived in good time for the train. This was the Irish Mail, and passengers for Birmingham had to change at Rugby. I saw my skips safely stowed away in the luggage van and thought no more about the matter until I got to Birmingham, when I discovered that my skips had not been put on the train at Rugby when I changed, but were still in the Irish Mail on their way to Holyhead! Imagine my consternation at the news! If my boss found out what had happened I would really be in for it, as there was no excuse possible for not having travelled up to Birmingham overnight, so that I had to think quickly.

I went round to the luggage department at New Street, and explained the whole situation to them. They acted promptly and wired to Chester to have the luggage taken off there and sent back to Birmingham as soon as possible. That being all that could be done for the moment, I went round then to the firm I was supposed to take the samples to, and explained that they would be in Birmingham by the evening, and could I have an appointment for say 5 p.m. The buyer in charge, who knew us well, and was a very good customer, said that would be quite all right; so I had till 5 p.m. to retrieve the situation.

That afternoon I went to the local theatre to pass away the time, and I remember that it was one of Shakespeare's plays. I never knew time drag so heavily on my hands as during that afternoon, and by about 3.30 p.m. I could bear it no longer, so got up and went round to New Street again. Imagine my relief when the first sight that greeted me was my skips on a trolley in the luggage department! It appeared that there was a train waiting to leave for Birmingham as the Irish Mail arrived at Chester, so the skips were taken off the one train and put on the other in a matter of minutes, and

they arrived in Birmingham soon after 2 p.m. Thus the situation was saved, and when I got back to London that night I was never more thankful in my life. A narrow shave indeed!

During the years I attended the W.E.A. Classes we had a number of Summer Schools at different Colleges of London University, which I enjoyed very much indeed. At such gatherings there was always an interesting display of literature on sale, of all kinds, and I came across some little pamphlets by Professor Soddy on the money question. These had a profound effect on my mind, and started me off on "monetary reform," a subject in which I have been vitally interested to this day. When people realise that the banks create the money they lend out to their customers as overdrafts *out of nothing*, they will begin to see something of the reason why the nation as a whole is entirely in debt to the banking system, and why as we get "richer" so the amount of indebtedness to the banks keeps on increasing.

This is a subject that needs careful study to appreciate fully, as on the face of it it seems absurd that bankers can create money out of nothing and charge us interest on it. But that is precisely what they do, and Professor Soddy in these little pamphlets was the first man to draw my attention to the fact. I have read much on the subject since, and have referred to it in some of my later books, as it is a question of vital importance to us all. I mention it here, because through what I had learnt from Professor Soddy I began to see the fundamental fallacy underlying the economic theories of Socialism and all other political *isms*. They strove to alter the deleterious *effects* of the present capitalist system, and did not realise the true *causes* of the malady, which lay in the credit structure erected by the banks for the financing of industry, since the establishment of the Bank of England in 1694. I had not heard about Social Credit in those days, but in later years grew to realise that here was the only just solution to the problem of "poverty amidst plenty."

During my years as a traveller I took two Christmas holi-

days in Paris, my first visits abroad, and enjoyed the experience very much indeed. It was such a change from England. My efforts to speak French were crude in the extreme, but it is surprising how one can make oneself understood. In 1925 I spent a holiday in Switzerland, but as I am no lover of mountains, I cannot say it was as enjoyable an experience as I hoped it would be, but it was worth while for all that. It is just as well to visit other countries and see how other people live. One can learn a very great deal that way.

By the time 1926 came along my eyes had reached a crisis point and my situation was becoming desperate indeed. In September, 1925, I had paid my yearly visit to the eye specialist, and he said my eyes were so bad (despite my not doing any clerical work for over seven years on his instructions) that he feared I might lose my sight altogether. He told me it was useless coming to see him any more, as he had already prescribed the strongest lenses it was possible to wear, so that as far as he was concerned there was nothing further to be done! According to what he hinted, my best course lay in doing nothing and lifting nothing for fear of having a retinal detachment, and just living a sort of "glass case" existence. Imagine what my thoughts were when I heard this news! I remember that when I got home I broke down and wept, and it took me weeks to come to myself at all. Despite my not reading, and using my eyes to the minimum, it seemed I was in danger of not being able to see at all; and the eye specialist could offer no help except to advise me to live a life of complete stagnation which would be worse than death itself to one with an active mind and temperament.

It was with these thoughts whirling through my brain that I went out for my usual Sunday walk one day in the early part of 1926, and whilst sitting down on a fallen tree to rest, a thought came into my mind with singular clarity. It was: "*You will soon be giving up your glasses altogether.*" I could not understand where the idea had come from, nor what its

import could be, as I could not imagine myself not wearing glasses even though with them my sight was so desperately bad. However, the thought stuck in my mind because it was so peculiar and so emphatic. A few weeks after this one of the men working in my boss's factory where the garments were made stopped me and said he wanted to speak to me for a few minutes. These chaps were always stopping me and talking about their woes, because if they had any grievances to settle with my boss they always tried to use me as intermediary. They sensed that I was sympathetic towards them and would take their part as far as I could, although at times I got into hot water for so doing. My boss would say: "Benjamin, don't let your Socialistic principles interfere with your work; you carry on with your own affairs and leave the men to me!" When I said it was not Socialism that actuated me but a sense of justice, he got even more annoyed, because these troubles were always about cutting the men's payments for garments, overtime rates, etc. Although my employer treated me so wonderfully fairly in my own financial transactions with him, he seemed to have a rooted idea that the workmen in the factory were always earning far too much money. Hence all the squabbles, in which I was nearly always embroiled. However, on this occasion it was something different.

It turned out this man wanted to talk to me about my eyes. He had heard how bad they had got, and told me one of his brothers also had bad sight and had had some treatment under a practitioner of the Bates System which had helped his vision very much. I enquired rather sceptically what sort of treatment it was, as the eye specialist I attended surely knew if there was anything likely to be of assistance to me, and had told me there was not; but he insisted that he would bring me a book to read on the subject and that I would find it very interesting. I took the whole thing to be something quite worthless, as my faith in the medical profession was supreme in those days, but this man was as good as

his word and brought up the book for me to read. It was called *Perfect Sight Without Glasses*, by W. H. Bates, M.D., of New York.

I could not read the book myself, owing to the state of my eyes, but I took it home and got my brother to read it to me. As he did so, a new light began to dawn on the horizon, and I began to feel that perhaps my sight *could* be saved after all, by these new methods Dr. Bates described in his book. I could see that orthodox oculists could do nothing for me, so that I had nothing to lose by trying something unorthodox. The whole method was completely revolutionary in conception, but I could see it was based on common-sense, and was therefore well worth a trial.

When I told this man I was interested in the book and would like some more information about the method it described, he said he would arrange an interview with his brother, who could tell me more about it. This he did, and in that way I got the name of a Bates' practitioner in the West End of London. I made an appointment and went along there one morning, and received the surprise of my life when this practitioner said to me, after listening to my story: "You are just the sort of chap we need in this kind of work. You could do a great deal for suffering humanity by taking up this profession."

I was completely dumbfounded at this, and could hardly believe my ears. I looked at him incredulously. Here I had come to see if anything could be done to save me from losing my sight, with nothing to look forward to in the future except a vague blankness, and here was this practitioner (whom I regarded in some awe at the time) calmly telling me I ought to be doing the sort of work he was doing! I felt a sudden stir inside me as though something previously sealed had at long last been revealed to the light of consciousness as my *real future destiny*, although the whole thing seemed fantastic in the extreme. But somehow, fantastic or not, I apprehended something prophetic in the words used by the prac-

titioner. After all, I reasoned, on my way home after the interview, he cannot say the same thing to everyone who comes to see him, so that there must have been *something* in his observations that was more than mere talking for talking's sake. The whole episode set me thinking furiously. It had set a spark to something vital inside me.

With regard to my eyes, after examining them, he said he thought they could certainly be improved, although he admitted they were in a very bad state; but it would mean leaving off my glasses altogether (a thing I had never done before since a small child) and carrying out a daily routine of treatment that he would prescribe for me, in order to enable the eyes *to begin to see for themselves*, something which they had never had a chance to do previously, because of the tremendously powerful spectacles I had always worn. These had been prescribed to *improve* my vision, but all the time they were making my sight worse and worse, according to the practitioner. Hence the need for stronger and stronger lenses as the years passed!

I determined to do implicitly everything I was told, and when I next paid the practitioner a visit minus my glasses both he and his lady assistant were visibly surprised. I was surprised at their surprise, but apparently it was far from everyone who obeyed so literally the injunction to discard their glasses (which I was only too thankful to do in my own case, incidentally, quite apart from their hideousness, for they were a terrible burden on my eyes, and I felt an immediate sense of relief on discarding them). Of course I could see very little indeed without them, everything being more or less of a blur, but I was quite prepared to put up with that for the time being, and the blurriness soon grew less as I continued the treatment.

The reading of Dr. Bates' book took place about the middle of March, 1926, and at that time I could see that my relations with my employer had reached a crisis point, too. For the five years I had been with him he had treated

me handsomely in every way, but the insidious pressure of the head traveller to get rid of me had been working on him despite himself, and when he saw my sight was so bad that it was painful for me to look up an order or try to read the price ticket on a garment, he naturally began to wonder how much longer I could carry on. So everything seemed to come to a head at once. He was beginning to think I could not work as a traveller much longer, and did not know what to do to make the situation clear to me for fear of hurting my feelings (especially as he knew I had a widowed mother to support); but here, quite suddenly, I told him about the book I had been loaned and my determination to carry out this new treatment for my eyes. I said I was going to throw up my job and live for the time being on the money I had saved whilst being in his service.

One can imagine what a tremendous relief it was to him to hear me say this, because he could not bring himself to broach the subject of my leaving his employment, and he only admitted what was in his mind when I told him what I proposed to do. Naturally he was very interested in the whole project and told me I could always come to him for financial assistance if I should need any help that way in the future. I am sure he meant it, but I never had to do this, thank goodness. Later I heard that he had ruined his business through unwise financial speculation (aided and abetted by the head traveller and his wife, who were his evil geniuses in the matter); and he ended up by going to penal servitude for three years through his equally unwise conduct in trying to retrieve the situation created by his previous financial errors of judgment.

I only learnt about all this years afterwards, but I always said to myself that when I left him his luck would go somehow (not that I wanted it to go), and sure enough it did. Naturally I was very sorry to hear what had befallen him, as I had much to thank him for during the five years I was with him (from 1st April, 1921, to 31st March, 1926—five

years to the day). But his future was his own concern and not my own, and I felt that what happened to him was the working out of his own destiny and no business of mine. I had rendered faithful service whilst I had been with him, and left him many really invaluable customers all over the United Kingdom as a remembrance of the years I had spent travelling about the country for him, despite the fact that I was "no traveller"!

Needless to say, when I took off my glasses and attempted to improve my sight by the Bates Method I had launched myself on an entirely new episode in my life, and the future looked very dim and uncertain indeed—both literally and metaphorically! But I had faith in that future, and despite the fact that many things came along to upset that faith temporarily, it persisted deep inside me, and was abundantly justified by the events that transpired later in transforming my hopeless-seeming outlook and career into something of service and value to humanity by the work I am enabled to do to-day as a Naturopath and writer on Nature Cure and allied subjects. The five years I spent as a traveller with O—— thus stood me in good stead, for they were years which helped me formulate my ideas and grapple with the deeper problems of life; and were an invaluable preliminary for what lay ahead.



## CHAPTER IV

### COTSWOLD DAYS

For a few months before I had left my job in Great Portland Street I had grown accustomed to going to Shearns in Tottenham Court Road for lunch when in London. I grew to like their fruit lunches, and quite unobtrusively, as it were, I began to find myself becoming a vegetarian. I do not know quite how it happened; it was not the result of propaganda or persuasion, or even due to the example of a friend or relative. It seemed the most natural thing in the world for me to become a vegetarian when I did, and I just did so, although I had no idea at all of the real science of dietetics. I just gave up eating meat and other flesh foods and trusted to luck that everything would work out for the best, as most vegetarians seem to do. It was only some years later that I began to understand the real basic facts of correct dieting.

It was because of my change-over to vegetarianism (I shall never forget how upset my mother was at the time, and prophesied all sorts of dire happenings if I did not eat meat!) that I later looked round for a vegetarian guest house to stay at to carry out my eye treatment. I had been to the Bates' practitioner in the West End a few times, and was carrying on with the treatment as best I could, and had made some general improvement; but I felt that if I went to stay in the country it would help me to make better progress. In this view the practitioner fully concurred, and as I had no idea of vegetarian guest houses I did not quite know where to look for one. Eventually I thought of the *Vegetarian News*, and looked up the advertisements there, and finally decided to write to a place in the Cotswolds that seemed all right. I had never been to the Cotswolds and had no idea what the country was like, but I thought I would try that

district as it seemed somewhat remote and interesting. I eventually fixed up at the guest house to stay a preliminary fortnight and went down there towards the end of July in 1926. And that was the beginning of a truly remarkable episode in my life which lasted for just a year.

When I arrived at Stroud Station I was met by the village carrier and driven out to the village where the guest house was, and was immediately charmed by the scenery and the local style of building, with its grey-walled cottages and houses and their darker grey roofs. I liked it all immensely, and the village itself seemed even better than the scenery I had passed through. It was in a valley between high hills, and there was an air of the deepest serenity and quietude about it. I felt that here was just the place I had been looking for and fate was on my side! The guest house itself was three old cottages converted into one, with a large garden, and was in full keeping with the rest of the village and its surroundings, and I was charmed with everything. I soon discovered that it was owned by a kind of religious organisation called "The Order of the Star in the East" (about which I knew nothing at all) and was affiliated to the Theosophical Society. I had heard about the latter in a dim sort of way, and had seen notices of lectures in the Underground Stations in London, and that was all, except that the name of Mrs. Annie Besant, its leader, was well known to me by repute.

Soon after I arrived arrangements began to be made for a Convention of Junior Theosophists, to be held in the guest house, so that before I knew where I was I was pitchforked into the midst of all these activities about which I had not the slightest knowledge. Quite a number of people came to stay at the guest house either to attend or assist at the Convention, and some of the lecturers stayed there too; so that I had plenty of interesting personages to talk to and had a very enjoyable time indeed in their company. I began to discover that Theosophy was the name given to a system of

thought which was a restatement of the "Ancient Wisdom" of antiquity, which, it was claimed, was the foundation of all religions, and through which a complete synthesis between religion, science and philosophy could be achieved. Needless to say I was deeply interested in this, as I had noted how these three major aspects of man's higher thinking and feeling nature had always been at loggerheads in the Western World. If there was some synthesising medium, which could reconcile them with one another, to the enduring benefit of all three, then I thought it only right to know more about it.

The more I learnt, the more I began to realise that my own philosophy of living, which I had been working out for myself during the previous five years, was, in its limited way, completely in line with the basic Theosophical teaching. No one was more surprised at this than myself, and delighted too, although there was much that I did not care for in the personal views and idiosyncracies of individual Theosophists whom I met at the guest house. I felt that there was "something" a bit wrong somewhere; that there was too much emphasis on psychic and supernatural things, and not sufficient down-to-earthness about their ideas and conceptions.

In certain individuals whom I met this accentuation of the super-physical went so far that I got the weirdest feelings possible myself, and felt that something eerie and uncanny was going on all around me. So much did I sense this that I even began to have nightmares and dreaded going to sleep at night!

This was hardly the sort of atmosphere to help me with my eye treatment, the keynote of which was *relaxation*—both mental and physical; so that I began to feel in rather a quandary. On the one hand I loved the village and its surroundings, and the guest house itself; I also enjoyed the food there, and liked many of the people I met there very much indeed. Also the basic tenets of Theosophy, as far as I could make them out, seemed to confirm and enlarge my own per-

sonal philosophy of living, especially the teachings about *Reincarnation* and *Karma*. But on the other hand there was this weird psychic atmosphere which definitely upset me and set my nerves on edge. I soon discovered that this feeling of psychism was engendered by a few people only, who were always talking about their *astral bodies* and what experiences they had in them when the physical body was asleep, what they saw clairvoyantly when we lesser mortals saw nothing, and such-like "occult" topics; and when they were not present everything was as pleasant and nice as one could wish it to be. But these individuals were some of the more important of the Theosophists at the Convention, who were regarded by most of the people present with some awe and even veneration, so that I felt rather nonplussed. It seemed that I was up against a very difficult and knotty problem, which would take quite a deal of solving, but I sensed that inside there was something really worth while to be had, could one but get hold of it.

It was in this frame of mind that I went through the fortnight of my stay at the guest house, and decided to stay another fortnight because I liked the local atmosphere so much, and my walks through the beech woods and over the hills which surrounded the village and hemmed it in on all sides. I met some very "colourful" local inhabitants, and spent many happy hours talking to them about country matters, in which I was deeply interested through my love of country walking and the countryside generally.

One of the Theosophical celebrities who came to the Convention was a Peter Freeman of Cardiff, who was (I learnt) also one of the trustees of the guest house. He was as much unlike the psychic type of Theosophist as it was possible to be, and was the embodiment of fun and humour. He was so unlike the others that it was quite remarkable. Everyone liked Peter immensely, and it was through his agency that I stayed on in the village throughout the ensuing autumn, winter and spring, and part of the summer as well. Peter was

a partner in a tobacco firm, and gave up his interests in it to follow his Theosophical calling. It was he who arranged for the taking over of a large house in the village, known as "The Croft," for some of the young people who had been to the Convention to stay at indefinitely. The house had been rented to put up some of those who had attended the Convention, and was in a rather unkempt and dilapidated state, but it was a very well-built place and nicely situated, and had distinct possibilities if properly looked after and brightened up with some paint and whitewash.

Towards the end of my projected stay at the guest house, just as I was wondering what to do next, as I did not in the least like the idea of returning to London, Peter called me on one side and asked me if I would like to stay on at "The Croft" with the other young people he named, to do some work in tidying up the garden, and helping generally with the running of the place. He said I could stay there for 15s. a week all found, which seemed to me very reasonable indeed, and I jumped at the offer. So that after my month at the guest house I took my things over to "The Croft," and the psychic atmosphere I have previously spoken about promptly vanished entirely. It seemed that it had no place at so un-Theosophical a habitat as "The Croft" apparently was. For which I was very thankful indeed, for I began to sleep soundly again, and not have any more nightmares, and the peace and quietude of the Cotswolds again enwrapped me in their folds.

I enjoyed working in the garden and trimming up the place generally, and there was always plenty of time for my eye exercises, which I persevered with steadily. The young people who were my associates were very nice and friendly, and we all got on very well together. I must confess, however, that we created quite a stir in the village in certain quarters, and many remarks were made about our supposed licentious practices! It seems that some of the more old-fashioned villagers could never imagine that two young men

and three young women could live together under one roof without any elderly chaperone of any kind, without something "dreadful" taking place; so that I am afraid that to certain of the village folk I myself must have earned quite a dubious kind of reputation. Incidentally in those days nothing could have been further from my thoughts than indulging in promiscuous sexual behaviour, and on the whole the majority of villagers accepted us for what we were, and liked us all immensely.

The trouble was that not very far away from the village an experimental Communistic community had been started many years previously at a place called "Whiteway Colony," and this had earned those living there a not very enviable reputation in the surrounding villages because of the fact that men and women lived together there without being married. They did this on so-called "Communistic principles," and many of the couples who so lived together were more true to each other than many married people. But it is difficult to try to break down convention, even in the heart of the country (even harder in fact than in town), and although the place as a whole was well conducted this idea of "free love" permeated the atmosphere, and the villagers were always telling tales of men and women walking about in the nude, and all sorts of other "shocking" conduct.

Of course most of this gossip was very far-fetched and bore no relation to the truth, but the stigma attaching to "Whiteway" inevitably fell on "The Croft" (at least in the minds of some of the local inhabitants) although at the time we, the occupants, were blissfully unaware of the fact. However, deeds speak louder than words, and judging by the way the majority of the village folk treated us, it was only the very small minority who allowed their prurience of thought to blind their real inner judgment of our character.

I soon got very friendly with some of the local worthies, and before long the name of "Benjy" (pronounced in the local idiom as *Benjoy*) was on everybody's lips. I can still

recall vividly some of the village social events I took part in, the most colourful one being on November 5th (Guy Fawkes' night). I should mention here that at "The Croft" we had a very large and roomy loft which we decided to turn into a social club for the local young men and women, and this venture turned out a very great success indeed. It was from "The Croft" that we all set out on Guy Fawkes' night with lighted paper lanterns in our hands, and in procession wound our way up the hillside to the north of the village, where we had a large bonfire ready at the top. At a given signal this was lit and we all threw on a special log which we had prepared for the occasion, each in turn. When the bonfire had burned itself out and all the fireworks had been let off, the procession wound its way down the hillside again with the lighted lanterns to "The Croft," where we finished up the evening with a special dance in the loft.

These social evenings at the club were always very well attended, and I fear we drew all the youth of the village there to the detriment of more important work or studies sometimes. Things were a bit rowdy at times, especially on Christmas Eve, but on the whole everything went off very well indeed, and everyone enjoyed themselves hugely.

"The Order of the Star" to which the guest house belonged was an organisation which was devoted to Krishnamurti, a young Hindu protégé of Mrs. Besant, I later learnt, who was reputed to be the coming *World Teacher*, for whose message the Order was to prepare the way. And although I kept an open mind on this question, as I knew nothing about the matter at all, what I heard of the writings and sayings of Krishnamurti impressed me very much indeed. There was no denying the fact that he was someone of great spiritual power and insight, and to this day I regard him as one of the leading spiritual figures of our age. But the organisation itself was disbanded a year or two later on Krishnamurti's own request, as he felt it was not the sort of thing through which he could work best, in whatever worldly mission he

had to perform, and the guest house later passed into private hands.

During my stay at the guest house I had become acquainted with a certain sheep-dog which used to walk calmly into the guest house as though he owned the place and would deposit himself on the rug in front of the fire whilst we were busily engaged in talking there. No one seemed to notice him until we became aware of a certain "doggy" kind of odour, when we would become suddenly conscious of our gate-crashing canine friend. One of the young girls at the guest house christened him "Honeybunch" ("Honey" for short), and this incongruous pseudonym stuck to him all the time I was in the village because the only other name he was known by was "Puppy" (a very inept name for a *dog of such remarkable characteristics as he soon began to display*).

"Honey" was about two years old, and had never been trained for sheep-watching, as his nature demanded. Consequently he became a roamer and the wild dog of the village, as his instinct was for chasing and harrying animals of all kinds, including other dogs, besides any sheep, horses or cattle, hens, etc., he came across. His owner just let him carry on as he wished, and everyone in the village prophesied a bad end for "Honey" because of his wildness. However, the more I knew him the more I grew to like him, and it seemed the liking was reciprocal. For "Honey" soon discovered that I was a lover of long country walks, and this was just the sort of thing he liked too (with suitable embellishments in the shape of chasing any four-legged or non-human two-legged creatures that crossed his path on the way).

When I had not yet been detected as a suitable prey for "Honey's" *wanderlust*, he used to round up the other dogs of the village and take them on hunting expeditions of his own (something I had never seen a dog do before—or since). So that once he had marked me down as his special victim there was no escape for me at all. He used to lie in wait for



me at the guest house (and later at "The Croft"), and no sooner did I put a foot out of doors than he was there, about twenty yards in front, leading the way wherever I might choose to go. He used to glance round from time to time to see if I was following, and whenever I went another way he immediately darted ahead in the direction I was now going, and so always kept his twenty yards' lead.

Many were the embarrassing experiences I went through because of "Honey," and my presence soon became a by-word in the surrounding countryside for trouble among any farm animals, hens, etc., that might be encountered. It was in vain that I expostulated with irate farmers. When I denied that "Honey" belonged to me, they accused me of downright lying, as he was always with me wherever I went, they pointed out with truth. It was quite impossible for them to realise that "Honey" was not in my charge, *but I in his—* very much against my will!

At "The Croft" we had two entrances, back and front, and "Honey" soon got to know that on Sundays I reserved the whole day for my country ramble, as I used to do when in London, and always left by the back entrance with my rucksack, etc. Accordingly at breakfast on Sunday morning a couple of shaggy paws followed by a black doggy nose used to appear at the kitchen window, at the back of the house (where we ate our breakfast meal), and sure enough there was "Honey" all ready for the day's outing. It was quite uncanny how he knew which day was Sunday, because other days he never arrived at "The Croft" quite so early, or went round to the back entrance to wait for me; he just lounged about the place generally. It was also uncanny how he always knew the time when I was about due to set off on my Sunday jaunts. He was certainly the most remarkable dog I have ever known, and not being one to dote over dogs, and regard everything they do as wonderful, as some people tend to do, I think my word can be accepted on this point. If I tried to steal out by the front entrance on occasion, on a Sunday

morning, "Honey" could not be hoodwinked by such a simple expedient. Before I had got out of the front garden he was already his customary twenty yards in the lead, running ahead with every anticipation of an excellent day's sport!

He would never take any food from me on these outings, and he was the most frugal-eating dog I have ever seen. His owner told me he ate only one small meal a day, and he was the fittest dog I have ever known. There was no doubt about his liking me, for whenever I approached near him at "The Croft" he would immediately lie down on his back for me to rub his tummy with my heavy working boots. He used to revel in such rough treatment; nothing finicky about him, oh no! And he would even allow me to put my fist right into his open mouth, and play with him that way, which was rather like putting one's fist into a lion's mouth, incidentally, considering his formidable jaws and splendid rows of teeth. There was no doubt about it, "Honey" and I got on splendidly, except for the rows he got me into on all sides during our rambles. But I had to forgive him for them, he was such a remarkable dog in all other respects. When I left the village later, he had perforce to return to his old practices, and I heard eventually he had to be shot because of his penchant for chasing sheep, lambs, etc. Poor "Honey," at least he did enjoy life in his doggy way whilst he lived, which is more than many dogs do—or even humans!

The lady who was the manageress of the guest house occasionally had her daughter and son-in-law come down to visit her from Cardiff (they were also Theosophists), and to my surprise I discovered that this young man was also a practitioner of the Bates Method and a former pupil of the practitioner I had attended in London. This young man became very interested in my case, and on his invitation I later went to stay with him in Cardiff for a few weeks, for some personal treatment. Under the first practitioner I had been told nothing about dieting, as this was not part of the Bates System; but under this new practitioner I found that

dieting was most important indeed, in his view, as through it the system was cleansed of impurities, and therefore the eyes were too. I accordingly adopted a very strict fruit-and-salad diet, with the minimum of cooked food and stodgy vegetarian dishes. I made far more progress under him than under the former practitioner and I soon began to find myself able to read a little, which was something I had been quite unable to do previously. My general vision had already improved sufficiently for me to get about all right out of doors, and do manual work, but I had still been quite unable to read anything in a book or newspaper. I now found I was beginning to be able to do this, albeit very slowly.

Naturally this encouraged me greatly and spurred me on to greater efforts. Soon I found I could read quite a few pages of a book at a time, although I usually had to do this with each eye alternately, except in a very good light when I could manage with both eyes together. Thus I found myself able to read at last after all these years without books, and the gratitude I felt is beyond expression. To the casual observer it was no doubt ridiculous to be thrilled at being able to read for a few minutes at a time with each eye alternately, at a few inches from the eye, and perhaps a little with both eyes together: but when I thought of the years when I had not been able to read at all, the whole thing was exciting beyond words. Here was a new world opening up before me indeed! Books I had deemed impossible for *me ever to contemplate reading were now within my grasp*, and the prospect was wonderful.

My gratitude to the practitioner was overwhelming, but he told me quite frankly that I was a very bad case and what seemed like great progress to me would be regarded by others as of very little account indeed. But one has to judge in these matters by what has gone before, and to me to be able to read again at all, however haltingly, and without glasses, was the greatest of boons and blessings. Owing to the strict diet I was on, my general health also improved considerably

whilst I was with this practitioner, and it was he who first taught me anything about Nature Cure and real Diet Reform. He introduced me to health magazines such as *Healthy Life* and *Health for All*. It was at his place that I saw my first copy of the latter, which was, incidentally, the June, 1927, issue—the very first issue ever to be published. Little did I anticipate then how close my relationship to that magazine was to be later!

This practitioner also confided to me that he thought a more simplified book about the Bates Method was required than that of Dr. Bates himself, and he said he thought he would write such a book some day. It never occurred to me then that I was to be the writer of such a book, which would be a best-seller of its kind! I certainly had no premonition of such events at the time.

I returned to the village after my few weeks' stay in Cardiff, but things had begun to change at "The Croft" and I felt it was about time I left the village altogether, and struck out elsewhere. But it befell that one or two projects I had had in mind came to nothing, so in the end I returned to Cardiff again for a further stay with the practitioner there, as he had already done my eyes and general health so much good. Thus I turned my back at last on that Cotswold village where I had spent so many memorable months, and had so many interesting and heart-warming experiences. Its memory will always be engraved on my mind, and I have returned to it since on occasion out of sheer nostalgia, but never to feel about it what I did during that year of my first visit there. There was something unique and never-to-be-recaptured about that, and I had perforce to accept the fact.

Sometimes my mind goes back over the scenes and events of those now far-off days, and I can still recapture the memory of winter evenings at "The Croft" with a log fire burning in the grate, and the lamp lit, and the sound of the bells of Painswick Church coming over the fields during bell-

ringing practice, which always took place on Tuesday evenings. It was sheer loveliness to listen to them in that enchanted stillness, punctuated only by the occasional barking of a fox in the beech woods, or the hooting of an owl. I sometimes still recall memories in lighter vein, such as our feelings at breakfast in the mornings when we used to hear the footsteps of the village postman echoing along the flagged path to the back door, and wondering what the post had in store for us. Sid Bullock, the village postman-cum-handyman-gardener at the guest house, was one of the most notable characters of the vicinity, and every postcard he used to deliver on his rounds was sure to be diligently read by him before delivery (often as he was coming right up to your door) so that all relevant material could be recounted later in the village to form part of the local gossip. Nothing escaped Sid's eagle eye in that respect, so that in our own cases we had to stipulate eventually that postcards were taboo when anything of special importance had to be written to us.

I can still recall the obsolete motor-car I bought in the hope of having it used for shopping expeditions to Gloucester, Cheltenham, etc., by the local inhabitants, to eke out my already dwindling funds, as no buses at all came to the village itself, and only on three days a week did one call within half a mile of it. But all the car did was involve me in expenses of all kinds, and its one crowning achievement was to take Sid Bullock, Billy Merritt, and two other local worthies to Swindon and back to see a football match, which event was long recounted in the local pub with great abundance of detail by those who took part in that memorable jaunt.

Billy Merritt was a local handyman out of a job at the time who did occasional odds and ends for us at "The Croft," and I vividly recall one experience with him when he was going to whitewash the ceiling of our dining room for us. He had his pail of whitewash all ready, and had

placed it on a low sideboard (which was covered with a large sheet, of course) preparatory to beginning his work. I happened to look into the room at that time, when Billy announced with a flourish that he was about to begin, and made a flying leap on to the sideboard from where he intended to reach up to the ceiling. But the pail of whitewash was projecting out from the sideboard, and as Billy leapt his toe struck its underside with some force, with the result that he landed on his back on the floor with most of the whitewash over his dungarees! He laughed just as much at the incident as I did, and it was certainly one of the funniest episodes I have ever witnessed in real life. What a joke—and what a mess!

But I must turn my back at last on the village in the Cotswolds that has so many outstanding memories for me, and return in thought to my adventures in Cardiff on my second visit there to the practitioner. My eyes kept on improving very gradually whilst I was with him, and I was very satisfied with this; but I could not visualise much of a future ahead of me, as my money was gradually being used up week by week, with nothing coming in, and I could not possibly see myself doing any work of any kind in the near future with my sight as it was. However, I continued to interest myself in Nature Cure and Diet Reform, as expounded to me by the practitioner, and built up quite a store of valuable knowledge on these subjects, including such things as the technique of fasting, the use of the enema, eliminative baths, etc., all of which was to stand me in good stead later, although I did not realise it at the time.

This practitioner, I also discovered, was a priest of the Liberal Catholic Church, another off-shoot of the Theosophical Society, as was "The Order of the Star," and something else called Co-Masonry. I was rather bewildered by all these organisations and activities, but went round to the Theosophical Headquarters in Cardiff on a Sunday afternoon to the meetings there, with my practitioner friend and his

wife, and learnt quite a lot from those visits, particularly when Peter Freeman (who I discovered was the President of the Welsh Section of the Society) was giving a talk. He certainly had common-sense and kept things on a practical and down-to-earth basis, which could hardly be said for most of the other speakers there. They seemed to regard the physical world as of the least consequence in our lives, and the super-physical as of supreme import. I was only too ready to agree that spiritual and higher mental factors were of fundamental importance to life, *but only if related to physical existence as we have to live it on this earth*; and it was on this point that I fell foul of most of those I listened to in those days.

I was able to read books now, albeit slowly, and took out some Theosophical books from the library at the Headquarters in Cardiff, and soon discovered that a certain C. W. Leadbeater was the presiding genius over the formulation of the current views and ideas being expounded under the guise of Theosophy by the lecturers I had been listening to. I heard that the Society itself had been founded by a Madame Blavatsky, but I was given to understand that her own works on the subject were so difficult and abstruse that very few Theosophists bothered ever to read them. They relied on the writings of C. W. Leadbeater and Mrs. Besant and a few others. But the name of Madame Blavatsky stuck in my mind and I resolved one day to make an attempt to read her monumental work *The Secret Doctrine*. I had an intuition I might get something from that not contained in the writings of any of these other people, and which might give me an indication of what Theosophy *really was*.

For truth to tell, the more I read books on the subject, and the more I attended meetings in Cardiff, the less I liked the whole set-up connoted by the name "Theosophical Society," although I appreciated that within the teachings covered by the term Theosophy were hidden pearls of great price for those seeking for real spiritual wisdom and enlightenment. By the time I left the practitioner in Cardiff in

September, 1927, to join my brother for a week's holiday in the Forest of Dean and the Wye Valley, I had decided I would have nothing further to do with the Theosophical Society or its members (I had had quite enough of them both!); although I still felt that some day I must read *The Secret Doctrine*, and still retained my belief in the teachings of *Reincarnation* and *Karma*. These two doctrines, taken from ancient Hinduism, I regarded as essential to any sane philosophy of life, a philosophy which sought to explain the myriad differences between people at birth, and the reason for their varied social and economic positions, etc. But otherwise I was quite satisfied that the average Theosophist was someone who merely ran away from life and sheltered behind the Theosophical teachings and the cosy social world that the Theosophical Society had built up for its members through its attendant and subsidiary organisations.

It was indeed a cosy and interesting little world of its own, within the great pulsating world outside, and over this little world within a world reigned Mrs. Besant and her co-worker C. W. Leadbeater. It was not until fourteen years later that I learnt there were other Theosophical Societies in existence than the one presided over by the Besant-Leadbeater axis, and it was only then that I began to discover the real truths of Theosophy *itself*, untarnished by the opinions and beliefs of those like Leadbeater who had taken upon themselves the task of interpreting Theosophy to the Western World in terms understandable to those who found the writings of Madame Blavatsky far too difficult and recondite for them. These other Theosophical Societies (about which I heard only so much later) refused to base their beliefs and ideas on the "say so" of self-elected Theosophical prophets like Leadbeater, with the result that some real Theosophy emerged from their literature for those ready to receive it. But as far as the world at large was concerned the damage had already been done. It was well-nigh impossible for these other and lesser-known Theosophical Societies, which strove



to put forward Madame Blavatsky's *own teachings in her own words*, to get anyone to listen to them.

After my week in the Forest of Dean with my brother, I returned to London, but did not quite know what to do next, because I had no settled programme ahead of me, apart from the continuance of my eye treatment. And as the lure of the Cotswolds was still heavy on me, I decided after a few weeks to go up to "Whiteway Colony" and stay there for a time. I had been to Whiteway a few times, and got to know some of the people there, and thought something might turn up for me if I went to live there for the time being. The colony had originally been founded by a band of people imbued with *real Communistic principles* (those more akin to Christ than to Karl Marx!) who had taken over a derelict tract of land and sought to make a living for themselves there by the toil of their own hands. They were a group of idealists of the highest kind, and their ideas were quite remote from all practical reality; so that the result was inevitable failure. They built their own little wooden shacks for themselves and set up a real communal type of existence in which everyone shared in everything belonging to all, with no money passing between them; and marriage was taboo there as being a symbol of our decadent materialistic age—with results already described.

Some of these unions were a great success, others a complete failure, and the colonists drifted on through the years, changing partners from time to time, and trying vainly to eke out an existence for themselves by their earthy labours. But the only undertaking on the colony that met with success was the bakery, which eventually earned a great reputation as far afield as Cheltenham, Gloucester and other large towns, so that in the end it was through mere commercialism and the changing from hand to hand of "filthy lucre" (that symbol of our capitalistic age abhorred most of all by the colonists on their first arrival at the colony) which made the

place at all a "going concern," if such a term is permissible in the circumstances!

I stayed at a bungalow built by a certain Francis Sedlak, a noted Czech philosopher and one of the founder-members of the colony, and had many interesting talks with him, although I could never agree with his ideas. They were as remote from reality in their way as those of the Cardiff Theosophists I had met and fled from, and I realised that as far as I was concerned the colony was a complete dead-end. I therefore left there after a few weeks, and returned home to London at the very end of December, 1927, not having the faintest idea what to do next, and looking forward to the coming year with some inner apprehension. What had it in store for me? That was a question I often asked myself, and could find no answer whatsoever.

But fate took a turn at this juncture, and before 1928 was very far advanced I found myself launched on a career as a Naturopath, which was a fulfilment of the prophecy of the Bates' practitioner I had first consulted in London in 1926; for I had determined to specialise in eye treatment on Nature Cure lines, which was to combine the principles of the Bates Method with those of Nature Cure, very much as expounded to me by my practitioner friend in Cardiff.

It is strange for me to recall now how these things worked themselves out, but work themselves out they did, and it was my sister who applied the spark which ignited the train of thought in my mind which had been smouldering there for some time quite unknown to myself. Whilst I was sitting at home one evening, talking about things in general and saying I did not know what to do next, she said to me: "Why not take up Nature Cure as a profession?" Then something inside me leapt into life, and immediately I saw what my real future destiny was to be. Of course, *Nature Cure!* Why on earth had I not thought of it myself? But then we never

do in these really important matters, do we? Someone (or something) has to supply the necessary push that gears our inner consciousness into full dynamic activity, and before we know where we are we are on our way towards a future that beckons us with outstretched arms! Such was certainly the case with myself.

## CHAPTER V

### I MAKE NATURE CURE MY CAREER

WHEN I decided, at the close of 1927, to make Nature Cure my career, it was easier said than done. In those days there was no recognised Nature Cure Training College in existence where tuition in Naturopathy could be had, and altogether there were only a handful of Nature Cure practitioners scattered over the country, the best of whom were American trained. However, I told myself the first step was to read some of the authoritative literature on the subject, about which I had already quite a smattering of knowledge, both theoretical and practical, from my Bates' practitioner friend in Cardiff.

Accordingly I wrote to Mr. Edgar Saxon, the editor of *Healthy Life*, for some advice on suitable material for a study of Nature Cure, and in due course I received his reply. Among other books he suggested I should obtain Dr. Henry Lindlahr's two volumes on *Natural Therapeutics, Its Philosophy and Practice*, and *The Science of Eating*, by Alfred McCann, as a start. And I certainly found these invaluable as a groundwork for the career I had set before myself.

Like everyone else, until the eye specialist had told me in so many words that medical science could do no more for me and that my case was quite hopeless, I had had implicit faith in the medical profession and the body of knowledge they represented. I thought that doctors knew all there was to know about disease and healing, and if there was anything they did not know, then no one else could possibly know anything more than they did. I accepted completely and whole-heartedly the viewpoint of the public at large, that when it came to disease the medical profession were the only ones capable of dealing with it, and it was their special

prerogative and sphere of influence.

It was only when I was brought into contact with the Bates Method, and discovered that there were other views about the correct treatment of defective vision than that accepted by orthodox oculists, that I began to see that everything was not quite what I had thought it to be where medical science was concerned. I had a rude awakening through my own case, and the fact that my eyes had definitely improved under these unorthodox methods, after I had been assured by the eminent eye specialist I had attended for years that nothing could possibly be done for me at all, very forcibly removed any blinkers that might have prevented me from seeing the true state of affairs. I therefore reasoned to myself: if the medical profession is wrong about defective vision, why not about other phases of medicine? So I was fully prepared for what Nature Cure had to teach me when I came in contact with the Cardiff practitioner.

The truths inherent in the Nature Cure philosophy were so self-evident, when one came to know about them, that I accepted them instinctively, and it seemed to me that every thinking man and woman would do likewise, if brought in contact with them. But I soon learnt otherwise. Whereas my own acceptance of Nature Cure was direct and immediate, I discovered that it was quite impossible for many people to grasp its essential worth and rightness, despite incontrovertible proof of the fact. So after a time my own enthusiasm became tempered with caution, and I realised that it was going to be a tremendous job to get the truths of Nature Cure fully before the public mind. That I myself was destined to play no small part in that very task through the ensuing years was quite unknown to me at the time, naturally, nor did I have any idea that pioneer work in that direction lay ahead of me through articles and books on the subject. I was just another of the converts that Nature Cure was gradually making in those far-off days, and that was all.

I accordingly set about the study of the books mentioned

by Mr. Saxon, together with orthodox textbooks on physiology and anatomy, etc., and all the enthusiasm previously thrown into the attainment of higher education for myself in the years from 1921-26 was now centred on the learning of Nature Cure and allied subjects. From a study of *Healthy Life* I learnt that some lectures on Nature Cure were being given by Harry Clements and Milton Powell at Warwick Gardens, where these two eminent Naturopaths were in practice, and my brother and I went along to these lectures each week and found them most illuminating. Then I noticed an advertisement in the same periodical saying that Harry Clements was willing to accept one or two private pupils for special training in Nature Cure.

Here was my golden opportunity, and I took it with both hands! I had an interview with Mr. Clements, who already knew me by sight, and explained the situation about my eyes, my financial position, etc., and he agreed to accept me as a pupil at reduced fees, as my own store of money was fast running out. I remember his surprise when on the first day of my training I gave him all the money for the course in a lump sum. I thought I might as well do this, as it was all the money I had left, and my brother had assured me he would help me out financially whilst I was earning no money for myself.

I must have been a rather apt pupil, for a remark of Milton Powell one day, to the effect that I "seemed to be lapping up the subject like a whale," evidently indicated that I was making very good progress in my studies. This was certainly a fact, and the more I learnt about the fundamental principles of Nature Cure, the more I seemed to know them already. It was not as though I was learning something new, but that I was *re-learning* something I had known for a very long time and temporarily forgotten.

Only an acceptance of the teachings of *Reincarnation* could explain this seeming paradox, as with so many other people who seem to know all about a subject when first

coming in touch with it, although they have never had any dealing with it in the present life. According to *Reincarnation* the answer to the seeming enigma is that we have known the subject very well in a previous incarnation, and are therefore only picking up the threads again in the present life. That at least seemed to be the case with me regarding Nature Cure, and it was with the greatest of ease that I acquainted myself with its teachings under Harry Clements' guidance.

The fact that I could devote several hours a day to reading and writing, in connection with my studies, shows the extent to which my eyes had improved since April, 1926, but I still had to be very careful about them and use them with strict caution. I could afford to take no chances with them. Each day I applied myself to my studies with the greatest of enthusiasm and determination, as befits one who sees ahead of him a career well worthy of his fullest allegiance. For it was certainly in that light that I saw Nature Cure. When I consider that I was then thirty-two years old, and had only just come across the real work in life I was destined to perform, it seems rather strange so many people regard it as axiomatic that when one leaves school one already knows the type of career one wants or is fitted for. In my own case it had needed many years of being tossed about on the sea of life before the right work and facilities for applying myself to it appeared. It must surely be so with countless thousands of others.

So much then for "vocational training," which is so greatly to the fore in educational circles these days! It can lead many into jobs they are quite unfitted for in the sense of *inner suitability*, and only in a small percentage of cases does it really fit the young aspirant for the type of career he is instinctively suited for and desirous of undertaking. Of course there are exceptions, but my own case makes me very suspicious on this point. What could vocational training have done for me, I often ask myself? The answer is precisely nothing at all. It was only in the course of the years that my

real work revealed itself to me as *that which I must do*, and it could not have come at any earlier time.

I studied Nature Cure dietetics under Mr. Clements, as part of my training, but like many other Diet Reform enthusiasts I allowed my enthusiasm to run away with my common-sense. I began to cut down my diet to just fruit and salads, and progressively eliminated all starch and protein and fats, in the belief that the more I kept to the cleansing foods, the better my health would be. It was of course a very mistaken idea, shared by many other newcomers to Diet Reform, and I paid the price of my inexperience and ignorance. I began to lose weight rapidly, and found my energy becoming less and less as each week passed. My brother had adopted Diet Reform under my example and encouragement, but he refused to go to such extremes as I did; consequently he kept very fit and well indeed, whereas I was looking very thin and haggard and greatly lacking in vitality. Not at all a good advertisement for the new method of eating I was advocating so vehemently to all and sundry!

The only time I felt somewhat better was when my brother and I and his fiancée went away to North Devon for a fortnight's walking tour, in the summer of 1928, when I ate more starches and proteins; but the lesson did not sink in. As soon as I got home again I again went back to fruit and salads with a small amount of dried fruit and practically nothing else, so that by the autumn I was in a rather poor state altogether. I could hardly drag myself about, and my main interest seemed to be gazing in bakers' shops to look at the bread! It seemed that some instinct deep inside me clamoured for bread, which I was not eating at all at the time, and that was why looking at bread in bakery shop windows became such an absorbing occupation to me in those days. It is something I have done neither before nor since, and it shows how we are impelled by our instincts despite our intellectual ideas and theories.



Things got to such a pitch that in November of that year my brother decided we had better talk the whole thing over with Harry Clements, and when we did so it soon transpired what the cause of the trouble was. He insisted that I should eat four to six ounces of wholewheat bread a day, with plenty of butter; have plenty of milk; and a protein such as egg or cheese daily. Within a week I was feeling a different being altogether, and since that time I have never looked back dietetically. It was an invaluable experience to me, in view of my later life-work, and taught me the dangers of unwise dieting by trying to exclude any but the alkaline and cleansing foods from one's diet. We can do this for shorter or longer periods, as part of a process of internal cleansing, but it is quite impossible to keep up such a restricted diet permanently. The body must keep on losing weight and energy all the time. (There are a few exceptional people who seem to be able to thrive on next to nothing, but it is not wise for the average individual to seek to follow their example!)

The lesson learnt about my own dietetic mistakes was so emphatic that it enabled me to write my own book on diet a year later, as I shall recount in due course. At the moment I had no thought of doing any such thing, although Harry Clements had suggested I ought to write a book about the Bates Method some time, as he thought I might make quite a good job of that. It did not seem a very alluring prospect at the time, but the idea germinated in my mind nevertheless. For in the summer of 1928 one of my relatives, whom I had introduced to *Health for All*, suggested that I should write the story of my own eye experiences for competition in the "True Story" contest which was a regular feature of that periodical, and I did so. I had no idea at the time that my act would bring such far-reaching consequences as regards my own life-work, but I just sat down and wrote the story of my case and sent it up to Mr. Stanley Lief, the editor, and thought no more about the matter. When, in due course,

I received a reply that my entry had won the competition for that month, no one could have been more surprised than I was, and the two guineas I was presented with went at once on books for further study.

As a result of having my story accepted in *Health for All*, I wrote and enquired whether they would be interested in a series of articles on the Bates Method, to which I received the reply that they would, but would like to see me first in order to talk over the matter.

At the subsequent interview Mr. John Wood, the general manager and managing editor, whose genial good humour and solid worth I soon learnt to appreciate, told me that he thought a book on the subject would be a "good seller" and that if I would prepare the manuscript, he would go right ahead with its publication, whilst in the meantime I could prepare a series of articles on the subject to appear in the magazine each month. Thus I made that first contact with Mr. Wood (and later with Mr. Stanley Lief) which was destined to be the real turning-point in my life.

Up to then I had studied Nature Cure and the principles of the natural treatment of defective vision, but so far had had no opportunity of putting my knowledge to any practical account, and, as far as finances were concerned, it was my brother who was supporting me at the time. Needless to say, this was hardly the sort of situation I relished, and I saw my hopes of establishing myself as a Naturopath growing dimmer and dimmer the more I realised how necessary it was to have a really wide clinical experience (and the requisite financial resources) before I could set myself up in proper practice. I had learnt an invaluable amount from Harry Clements, and much from my own personal studies and case, but the Nature Cure College Harry Clements and Milton Powell were destined to set up later on for full-time training (with its attendant clinic) was not yet even contemplated. So that I felt I had come to an impasse, because of this lack of adequate clinic facilities.

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I had been practising off and on with my knowledge of Naturopathy on sundry relatives and friends, and was getting more and more confident of my own ability, but the financial insecurity and doubt about it all played on me to such an extent that I felt nearly on the verge of a nervous breakdown. This was after I had written my book about the eyes and was waiting for word of its acceptance, so that I decided the best thing for me to do was to go away to the country for a few weeks for a complete rest and relaxation. I had been studying and working at full stretch for over a year, and the need for such a rest period was all too obvious.

It so happened that in September, 1928, I went down for the week-end with my brother to a guest house near Haslemere where my brother and his fiancée had spent some very enjoyable times, and where the country round about was delightful for walking. On my first visit to the guest house I immediately took a great liking to it, with its old-world atmosphere dating back to Tudor times, and its lovely country setting; and it was to this guest house I decided to go for the rest I needed. But I had no money, so I wrote to the people who owned the guest house to see if they would let me stay there for a few weeks in exchange for my services in working in the garden and doing other odd jobs, etc. To my great delight a reply came back in the affirmative, and I went down in March, 1929, to spend nearly two months there, during which time I had some of the pleasantest days of my life. The atmosphere of old-worldness and the quietness were just what my mind and nerves needed for healing and recuperation, and my work in the garden was just what my body required. The food was of the best, and I slept out in a tent most of the time; so that everything was just perfect—including the weather! It was that remarkable spring and summer of 1929 when we had a plethora of sunshine and practically no rain.

One of the most delightful memories of my two months' stay was waking up at dawn, in the tent, which was pitched

in a field, and listening to the tumultuous uproar of bird song all around me. It began as a faint murmur away to the east, then gradually approached nearer and nearer, increasing steadily in volume, as more and more birds joined in, until I was engulfed in a veritable tempest of sound as thousands of pulsating little throats united in this daily chorus of thanks to Life and Nature. I had never heard anything like it previously, and the massed music of the feathered songsters was quite overwhelming. It moved me profoundly, and was an unforgettable experience.

I made many good friends at the guest house, especially the proprietor and his wife, and later came to regard it as a sort of "home from home," I paid so many visits there. But this one special and lengthy stay was memorable in the extreme, for the reasons just given, and it was whilst I was there that the final arrangements about the publication of my book were completed. We had no idea of a title for it, and it was only at the last minute that we decided on *Better Sight Without Glasses*, and the selling price as 3s. 6d. Whilst at the guest house I had been thinking things over and had come to the conclusion that there was no really simple book on Diet Reform to be had anywhere, so that the idea occurred to me to write one myself, which I did as soon as I returned home to London.

This occupied me only a few weeks, and as my prospects as a Naturopath were still very flimsy in the extreme, all the good of my stay at the guest house was soon obliterated. Those weeks between May and September, 1929, were some of the blackest I have ever passed through, despite the golden glory of the summer. I felt in complete despair about the future, and my one solace at the time was to go up to Epping Forest as often as possible (only a short train ride away), because in its woodlands and open grassy spaces I forgot my worries for the moment. And one such day I made a momentous decision. I decided to write to Stanley Lief to see if some work could not be found for me on *Health for All*.

It was only when I began to write essays during my student days at the University Extension Classes that I first discovered I had some literary talent, and John Wood had remarked on this when interviewing me about the publication of my book and series of articles for *Health for All*. It seemed that writing about Nature Cure was my particular province rather than actual practitioner work, and that was why I decided to "take the bull by the horns" and write to Stanley Lief. He replied, making an appointment for me to meet him and John Wood at the *Health for All* offices. That was certainly a red-letter day in my life! As soon as I met Stanley Lief I realised he was someone with great "power" and a very strong personal magnetism—a personal magnetism that radiated from him, although he himself was rather quiet-spoken and undemonstrative. In his presence I realised in a flash why his name was paramount in Natural Healing circles in this country, and why his Nature Cure establishment "Champneys" was the Mecca of the uncured it had already become, even in those days.

We talked things over, and it was decided that some work should be given me in connection with the Postal Advice Department of *Health for All*, in addition to my contributing articles for the magazine on topics of Nature Cure interest. I was hoping for the latter assignment when I applied for work, but was quite unprepared for the offer of Postal Advice work, which was something to which I had never given a thought. But both Stanley Lief and John Wood explained to me that the work of the Advice Department was growing steadily in volume each month, with constant enquiries on health problems and requests for detailed health advice, and it was more than they could cope with themselves. Therefore they needed someone with a thorough knowledge of Nature Cure principles, and some literary ability, to help them in the work. It seemed that I was just the man for the job, and no one could have been more thankful than I!

Here at last was the solution to my pressing financial diffi-

culties, with plenty of scope for expressing myself through Nature Cure work of a literary character, which I had come to realise was my true bent. Financial details were fixed up satisfactorily, and it was explained to me how the work was to be carried out, under the personal direction and supervision of Stanley Lief. He and John Wood were to go over all correspondence first, then indicate the lines along which advice was to be given, and it was to be left to me to fill in the details and type out the correspondence. I was given the choice of working at the *Health for All* office or in my own home, and I immediately preferred the latter, as it allowed me much more freedom of action, and did not tie me down to any fixed hours of work, etc. I had to provide myself with a typewriter, and learn how to type, but John Wood told me this would be quite easy, and that every assistance in the work I would be called upon to do would be provided by him or some of his office staff.

It was certainly a job after my own heart, and turned out to be just what I was looking for, although at the time I did not know it even existed. As a matter of fact it had not existed at the time; it was only created for me because of the desire of Stanley Lief and John Wood to provide me with something to do (which was at the same time of assistance to them, of course).

I hope the many years of faithful service I have rendered to the magazine since that date amply repay the kindness and forethought displayed on my behalf on that occasion. It lifted a tremendous weight from me, mentally, and opened the door to a life such as I wanted to lead—one of service to my fellows in physical distress, and with plenty of opportunity for initiative and self-development along my chosen path in the world.

At the same memorable interview Stanley Lief invited me to come down to Champneys to look over the place, and also to give some professional advice to some of his patients about the natural treatment of defective vision. I thoroughly

enjoyed my visit, and the surroundings, but felt that as regards the professional part I had quite a lot to learn. This I hoped to rectify as the years passed, and as my knowledge and experience grew.

My contact with *Health for All* thus being established on a firm and durable basis, I felt I was entering upon an entirely new and promising phase of my career, and as *Better Sight Without Glasses* came out at the same time, and proved an instantaneous success, it certainly seemed that I had turned the corner. But even to this day I look back on those weeks between May and September, 1929, as the very blackest I have ever passed through (except for the period when I thought I was going to lose my sight entirely, before I began the Bates Method); and it was only the sheer will to go on, plus the unflagging encouragement of my brother, that kept me going at the time. My brother always said he *knew* I would win through in the end, and no one was more pleased than he at this new turn of events. He loaned me the money for a second-hand typewriter, and I soon learnt how to handle it, with fair dexterity and accuracy, and I was thus launched on my new and most interesting vocation, as general factotum to a Health Service that has helped thousands to better health annually, all over the world.

It was always gratifying to me to see the letters of grateful thanks and appreciation pour in from those we had helped, for I knew that I had played my part in the results secured, albeit an anonymous one. I knew that time and experience would provide me with greater and greater opportunities for service along the lines in question, which assuredly has come to pass. If ever work has been well worth doing, that assuredly has, and the fact that it reflected itself in better and happier circumstances for myself I took as my appropriate reward.

I showed the manuscript of my book on diet to John Wood, who read it through, and said he thought it was just what was needed (in which view Stanley Lief also concurred later),

except that it should contain practical advice at the end with regard to the self-treatment of common ailments through corrective diet. Without that, he thought, the book would be incomplete. Thereupon we worked out the practical section with the Postal Advice Department material, and consent was given by Stanley Lief for the use of what was incorporated in the book. When it finally appeared in print in 1931, it became a success right away, just as had *Better Sight Without Glasses*, which by that time had already passed through several editions; so that I felt I was properly launched on my career as a writer on Nature Cure and allied subjects.

My big book on Nature Cure, *Everybody's Guide to Nature Cure*, was completed in 1932-33, and the practical portion of it, which has proved such a blessing to thousands of ill folk the world over, was again the suggestion of John Wood. He said it should be as complete and comprehensive as possible, and with his encouragement I set to work on this rather formidable task, as the book ran to 200,000 words when completed. It did not achieve publication until 1936, for various reasons, but also proved an instantaneous success, as had my other two books.

The voluminous correspondence I have received from all parts of the world with regard to these three books has always provided me with a sense of satisfaction in the knowledge of the splendid work they are doing in helping suffering humanity to better health through the application of Nature Cure methods, albeit I sometimes had to devote considerable time to answering this spate of letters. At least it showed me my work was appreciated, and that it was bearing fruit. Some of my correspondents were not as reasonable or thoughtful as others, and expected me to answer all sorts of questions for them without even enclosing a stamp for reply.\* Some

\* I even got (and still get) urgent requests for health advice by air mail from places as far away as South Africa, Australia, New Zealand, India, Ceylon, etc., without even the cost of the air mail



even thought that the fact that they had bought one or more of my books entitled them to a free consultation about their ailments! I soon learnt that it takes all sorts of people to make a world, no less so in the world of natural healing than elsewhere.

But I do not wish to run too far ahead with my narrative, and must therefore return to 1929, which was a memorable year for me in another respect. It brought me into contact with the writings of D. H. Lawrence, from which I gained a tremendous amount of inner assistance. I had heard Lawrence's name mentioned here and there as a person who specialised in sexy literature and was a sort of sexual pervert, and had never troubled to read any of his novels, despite the fact that his name had been mentioned in the course of lectures which dealt with Whitman, Goethe, Nietzsche, etc., already described. But one day my brother bought a copy of *Aaron's Rod*, by Lawrence, just out of curiosity, and before he had gone half-way through it he was telling me I *must* read it, as he was sure I would find in Lawrence an author after my own heart, despite the tales told about him which had previously kept me from reading him. This proved to be a fact, and the more I read Lawrence's work, the more I realised that here was someone I could really learn from when it came to deep wisdom and insight into life and people, as opposed to mere brain-mind knowledge and intellectual musings about the world and the human beings who inhabited it.

It is difficult to talk about Lawrence to people who have never read him, and even more so to many who have. Lawrence's name had become so associated with the word "sex" in the public mind that if one says one is an admirer

postage being enclosed. I often wondered (and still wonder) if these people ever stopped to consider the time, labour and expense such requests entailed for me. But I regarded (and still regard) such appeals as duties I *must* accept and execute as functions associated with my particular destiny and work in the world, however annoying and trying at times!

of Lawrence, and has found him to be an author of outstanding genius and deep human understanding, one is immediately regarded as a sexual pervert oneself, or at least someone whose main preoccupation is with sexual matters. Nothing could have been further from the truth in my own case, and much of the knowledge I gained from my study of Lawrence in those days (which included practically every word he had written) has been incorporated into my book *How to Live for Health and Happiness*, which I wrote during the war years from 1939-44. Not that I looked to Lawrence for guidance upon health matters; far from it. Physically he was always a sick man and died at an early age from chest trouble. But his realisation that it is our deeper instincts and intuitions that should guide our life and conduct, if we are to live to the full, with the intellect as servant *and not master* of the psyche, was something that impressed itself upon me very profoundly at the time, and as such fits in perfectly with the Nature Cure idea of living in accordance with Nature and Natural Law. For it is through our deeper instincts (as guided by intuition) that our basic inner urges and desires express themselves, and are thus the voice of Nature speaking through us.

What Lawrence was trying to say was that our age is an over-intellectualised one, wherein the intellect seeks to dominate all activities of mind and body, leaving very little room for scope for the functioning of instinct or intuition, because the intellect prevents their proper expression in consciousness *except as servitors of its own will and direction*. Thus we can never be our *real selves* because the intellect imposes its numbing sway on the real dynamic forces of our being.

It is very difficult for most people to understand the full implications of this conflict between intellect on the one hand and instinct and intuition on the other. The intellect is a most important factor in our lives, and when we talk about deposing it it is often assumed we mean doing away with

reason altogether and throwing ourselves open to the unbridled expression of crude instinct within us, which to most people merely connotes unlicensed sex. Nothing could be further from the truth; but the fact that sex plays such a prominent part in Lawrence's novels only serves to accentuate this belief, although to Lawrence the basic idea was to show how this greatest of instincts is perverted these days by the vast majority of people through their intellect, and so debased and abused. Lawrence called this "sex in the head" because he wished to show that when such people *think* they feel sexual desire, it is not real sex desire at all; it is merely an artificial or forced product resulting from *ideas* generated in the mind, and whipped up by the mind, and there is very little of pure sex feeling in it at all. The sex instinct is therefore perverted in such cases, because it is directed through the intellect, and not allowed expression in its own way, and the result is a prostitution of the instinct in question, for purposes of mere self-gratification. (Exactly the same with the instinct of hunger and eating.)

It is extremely hard for most people to understand the meaning of this process, for they mix up mere emotionalism with genuine desire when their instinctive urges are not being directed through the intellect, and thereby fail to appreciate the real nature of the resultant inner conflict generated by this battle of forces. That is why the whole of Lawrence's work has been completely misunderstood, and he has come to be regarded as a mere purveyor of sexy stories and prurient literature. Nothing could be more ridiculous than such a belief, but if one tries to champion Lawrence, he immediately runs the risk of being regarded as a "sexualist" himself, because of this erroneous assumption in the public mind. The point to realise here is that many real "sexualists" do champion Lawrence, because they, too, have completely misunderstood him and regard him as a condoner of loose morals and sexual promiscuity, which is the complete opposite to his real intention. Thus the whole situation is very compli-

cated, and the writing of *Lady Chatterley's Lover* made matters even more difficult. But if one *really* understands what Lawrence's own philosophy of life was, as reflected in his novels, essays and poems, it is impossible not to see it revealed in every page of his writings. I for one am deeply grateful for the enlightenment gained in those days in 1929-30, and for the clarification of ideas about the deeper problems of life that resulted from it.

I do not read Lawrence these days, because I feel the need for his influence in my life has long since departed, as with Bernard Shaw. At one time (back in 1922-24) Shaw meant a very great deal to me, because at my mental and spiritual level then he was able to help me very greatly to an expansion of knowledge and inner understanding. But to-day I regard Shaw as merely a "has-been," albeit a very great "has-been." I feel very much the same about Lawrence too. I have gone on from the point where he was able to help me understand life and myself more clearly, and now look to others for further enlightenment. But I shall always remain grateful to his memory for what he did for me, and I shall never cease to champion him, despite the dangers of being myself misunderstood in the process. He is definitely one of the major educative milestones in my life to date, and I always believe in being loyal in thought and word to those who are of such invaluable service to me.

When, later on, I discovered in the works of Madame H. P. Blavatsky a further key to the opening up and development of my inner knowledge and understanding, I became her champion too, despite the even worse public disrepute in which her name was held than that of Lawrence. But that does not matter to me in the slightest, and I know where my allegiance is due in public and out of it in regard to that very much misunderstood and maligned Theosophy which she brought to the Western World towards the end of the last century. I shall have more to say on this particular topic later, and merely mention it here because I seem to be

one of those individuals whose lot in life it is to defend and champion unpopular causes and people, causes and people in which and through whom *real truth and wisdom are to be found* by the earnest and honest seeker.

Of course there is no real connection between Lawrence and Madame Blavatsky, I would hasten to make clear to the reader, in case some should have misconstrued my remarks. The connection is only through *myself*, in respect of the influence they have had in shaping my thoughts and ideas about life and living. It is extremely doubtful whether Lawrence himself would have found anything of note in Madame Blavatsky's writings, as his mind did not run in that direction; although his old and close friend Aldous Huxley has become a very keen student and exponent of that Eastern way of life Madame Blavatsky brought to the notice of thinking occidental men and women through her writings.

The contrast between Lawrence and Huxley was profound in the extreme. They were poles apart in the way they looked at life and reacted to it. No one is more aware of this fact than Huxley himself, as shown in his *Point Counterpoint*, when he is talking about *Rampion*, one of his characters in that novel. *Rampion* was a somewhat disguised portrait of Lawrence, and in writing about him in the book as he does Huxley shows very clearly what he thought of Lawrence and how utterly impossible it was for him to be like him. Incidentally, Huxley's own attitude to sex, as expressed in his novels, is that coldly intellectual one which is anathema to Lawrence, and I personally have always been repelled by Huxley's references to the subject in his writings (even before I knew anything about Lawrence) because of that underlying attitude.

Another thing I found I had in common with Lawrence (when I came to study him) was his distrust of Socialism and Socialists. He appreciated right away that their "Brotherly Love" originated in ideas in their mind rather than from any real warmth of feeling in their heart. And to Lawrence

Socialists personified that mentalised approach to life and its problems that he detested so utterly. They distorted life because they saw it entirely through their intellects, and consequently their solutions for life's problems were inevitably mental ones and did not correspond with the true facts of existence as lived by human beings. They corresponded with those facts *in theory*, and could be very nicely and tidily resolved in talking and writing about these matters; but Lawrence always asserted that when it came to actually working things out against a background of living beings with living problems and situations to face, the nice tidy theories would have a habit of breaking down, as we have since discovered to be the fact under our Labour Government.

Lawrence also would have nothing to do with the Socialist belief that all men are equal. He always maintained that no two men are or could be equal, and that the difference was not only physical and mental but also spiritual, some being far more evolved spiritually than others. These views appear all through his writings, and only serve to confuse the average reader more and more, because his own approach to life is through mental ideas and concepts such as Socialism loves to toy with. I personally have always found that people with *really mature minds* are never Socialists (or Communists). This does not mean they have no sympathy with the down-trodden, and do not want to see a better reorganisation of society along more equalitarian lines economically. But such mature-thinking people realise that a really satisfactory solution to the problem will not and cannot be found through Socialism, because it itself is merely a hotch-potch of muddled ethics and economics, with no real grounding in *reality*. That is why the men who guide the Socialist movement are inevitably found to be immature thinkers (however brilliant their intellects) and quite incapable of understanding what living really is, or of finding the real way to the solution of its many conflicting problems.

It is quite impossible to make the average Socialist under-

stand all this, so one has to accept the fact that in such matters one is merely trying to battle against the impossible in getting one's views appreciated, much less acted upon. To become a Socialist (or Communist) is the easiest thing in the world. All that is needed is the changing of one set of political ideas for another. But to be able to live really fully and effectively, which is the true aim of human existence, is something far harder than that. It means changing oneself *from within* and adopting an entirely new set of values from that adhered to by the vast mass of one's fellows. That was always Lawrence's contention, and it has also been my own. It is a view that gains very few converts, for it is the *hard way* to successful living—far harder than trying to allow changing economic circumstances, as fostered by Socialist planners, to do it for you.

## CHAPTER VI

### I DISCOVER THAT THE MORE I LEARN

#### THE LESS I KNOW!

DURING the years 1929-39 my understanding of Nature Cure, both in theory and practice, grew steadily, but at the same time I must admit that I thought I knew far more about the subject in 1929 than I did ten years later, and exactly the same with regard to the years from 1939-49. I definitely thought I knew more about Nature Cure in 1939 than I found I did in 1949, and as I grow older no doubt I shall keep on discovering this same phenomenon repeating itself all the time. This is inevitable, because the more we learn about a subject, the more we appreciate how relatively small our knowledge of it is. At first we feel we know *all* about it, having covered its rudimentary principles; but as we study it more and more deeply, so we find out how much more still there is to know about it. With every *living* science, such as Nature Cure is, this is bound to be so. If anyone tells you he knows *all* about Nature Cure, then you can say to yourself at once: this man has much to learn about the subject, and is ignorant of his own shortcomings.

I soon discovered that there were conflicting schools of thought about Nature Cure or certain aspects of it. Some people did not believe in fasting; others did. Some did not believe in the use of the enema; others did. Some spoke and wrote about the "miracle of milk"; others likewise spoke and wrote about "the dangers of milk." Some said it was unwise to eat much fruit, or even any fruit; others pinned their faith on fruit as a curative and cleansing agent. Some said never mix starches and proteins; others said it did not matter. And so on and so forth. It became clear to me very



speedily that I had better make my own mind up about these conflicting viewpoints and stick to that which I found to be best in treating cases (as far as my own personal experience went). I was prepared to keep an open mind and be guided by results, and that is the attitude I have kept up to this day, as being the only worth-while one. Dogmatism about Nature Cure was as ill-fitting, I believed, as about religion, and to many people Nature Cure seemed a veritable religion indeed.

The fact that there is so much conflict of ideas among those practising Nature Cure tends to put some people off. They reason that Naturopaths are unable to agree among themselves as to what is best for the treatment of their cases, so there must be something wrong with Nature Cure itself. This view is entirely erroneous, however. The basic principles of Nature Cure are absolutely sound and unshakeable, and it is only to be expected that different people should tend to apply those principles somewhat differently, according to individual bent. If Nature Cure were a dead science it would be different. But being a living, growing thing, it is surely only right that superficial divergencies of view should exist among practitioners? The only thing is to be ready to learn by experience and alter theories to suit facts, and not *vice versa*.

I also discovered that many people tended to associate Nature Cure with certain individual names such as Stanley Lief or Edgar Saxon, and to assume that what either said on certain points was lasting and final. It is certainly wise in these matters to follow the advice of acknowledged experts, if one is a layman, but for the practitioner it is fatal, it seems to me, to adhere blindly to anyone's "say so" and ignore whatever anyone else says. This is the surest way towards dogmatism of outlook and sterility of results.

I also found a tendency to regard people as not just exponents of Nature Cure, but in some way as actually its embodiment, so that if such people did something we as individuals

did not approve of, it seemed that it was Nature Cure itself which was at fault. This is a common failing of human nature, but I sincerely hope it is not one of my own, however many other failings I may have. It is fatal to identify a philosophy of disease-causation and cure, such as Nature Cure is, with any particular individual, however great his contribution to the subject may be. His personal efforts and achievements may be of the highest, but what he does or is has nothing to do with Nature Cure itself. That stands or falls on the rightness or wrongness of its basic tenets, not on the foibles or frailties of individuals.

Thus I soon found out one had to keep not only an open mind but a balanced and determined mental outlook on the whole field of natural therapeutics, as one could so readily be swept away by this or that minor current and miss the broad sweep of the subject. I found some practitioners practising herbalism with their Nature Cure, and others biochemistry or homeopathy, whilst others were completely opposed to such additions to Nature Cure practice, and stuck rigidly to the standard Nature Cure therapeutic measures such as fasting, dieting, manipulative treatment, hydrotherapy, etc. I confess I belong and always have belonged to this latter school of thought, as I feel that here the Nature Cure philosophy is really fully applied and the practitioner is ready to stand or fall by his results. Where homeopathy or herbalism or biochemistry is used, these may do good in their way, but it is difficult to say how much they have achieved and how much Nature Cure itself has.

Of later years I have tended to "dabble" more in homeopathy and biochemistry, and I feel that each has a valuable contribution to make to Nature Cure practice (especially homeopathy), if used as subsidiary to the usual Nature Cure methods; but the tendency is for the practitioner to rely more and more on these subsidiary aids and to forget his basic Nature Cure teachings. The consequence is that we find many so-called Naturopaths merely giving their patients some

manipulative treatment and some herbs or biochemic or homoeopathic pills and neglecting altogether the dietetic side of the matter. This only leads the whole Nature Cure movement into disrepute, and for that reason I have always greatly admired the stand that Stanley Lief and Harry Clements have taken on this issue. They keep to *straight Nature Cure* all the time, and leave it to others less capable or confident than themselves to chase after this or that subsidiary or substitute therapy.

It tends to destroy public confidence when they find Naturopaths not advocating full adherence to Nature Cure principles in the advice given to patients, and that is why I am always glad to think that my own books have spread the knowledge of real 100 per cent Nature Cure so widely over the Earth's surface. I have met with a certain amount of opposition and criticism in this connection from some Naturopaths, strange as it may seem to the lay reader. The contention is that it is wrong to give lay people detailed advice on self-treatment for any particular ailment, as some may need somewhat different treatment from others, and all cases need personal Naturopathic examination in the first place. But the point here, as I see it, is that the vast majority of sick folk are quite incapable of securing such personal Naturopathic advice, either because of the great shortage of trained Naturopaths or for financial reasons; so that my books, being practical and essentially for the layman, tend to fill a much-needed want in the world of Nature Cure. This truth is amply borne out by the letters I receive from all over the world, as already mentioned, and the good thus secured amply outweighs any inherent dangers in the method, in my own opinion. Then again, people can so easily lend round books to relatives and friends, and thus put them into immediate touch with Nature Cure methods too—something quite impossible if there were no books on the subject of a practical nature. So that I feel my own efforts in this field have more than justified themselves.

In course of time I found that there were many other factors besides purely physical or physiological ones that had to be considered in relation to the causation and cure of disease, and that is why my own writings on the subject tended to interest themselves more and more with psychological and spiritual factors (much to the disgust of many practitioners and laymen, it must be admitted). These good people are quite ready to give me credit for the work I have done for Nature Cure when I confined my efforts to writing about diet, fasting, and the inculcation of ideas about healthy living generally in the public mind; but take affront if I say anything about subjects with which they personally do not agree. This tendency reached its greatest pitch when I began associating my name in print with Theosophy, in the later 1940s, as I shall recount later, some even going to the lengths of claiming that I was trying to turn Nature Cure into a sort of appendage to Theosophy or *vice versa*! I do not mind criticism, however violent, as it shows people take a vital interest in the whole field of Nature Cure work; but where such criticism arises from a single-track attitude to the subject, it seems to me to be rather out of place. No philosophy, much less a living, vital one such as Nature Cure, which has direct relation to the whole life-pattern of the individual, can be expected to keep within the narrow limits some people seem constrained to mark out for it. (*Thus far and no farther!*)

In 1930 I became a member of the British Association of Naturopaths, and I am still one of the oldest members extant, although there are a number of Naturopaths who belonged to the Nature Cure Association (since merged with the British Association of Naturopaths into the British Naturopathic Association) whose connection with the movement is considerably longer than my own. I have always felt, however, that my own particular line was writing about Nature Cure rather than practising it, so that my own path through the years has inevitably been somewhat different from most

other Naturopaths. I feel that the publicity I give to the subject gives them a wider field for service (and income), and so I regard my own efforts in Naturopathic work as beneficial to both layman and practitioner alike.

With regard to this question of income, some lay people seem to imagine that if one dedicates one's life to Nature Cure work, one should be satisfied with the knowledge that one is thereby helping suffering humanity, and should therefore need no further recompense. It is true the work in that sense brings its own reward, but Naturopaths have to live just as other people, and the fact that some earn very large incomes does not mean that all do. For many years my own earnings were modest in the extreme, and I have never sought for more than sufficient to live reasonably comfortably. But if one gives one's advice away free, or for next to nothing, people tend to value it at precisely the same valuation, I have found. No one begrudges the doctor what he earns, so why apply different standards to the Nature Cure profession? There may be some Naturopaths who overcharge, and think only of the money side of their work, but they are only a very small minority, I am sure. In general, in charging a proper fee for advice and treatment, the Naturopath keeps up the dignity of his profession, besides keeping himself solvent.

Of course, where possible, adequate provision should always be made for the treatment of poor people in Nature Cure clinics and homes; but to do this money is required in fairly large sums, and this the Nature Cure public has never really understood. In orthodox medical circles money has always been provided by the lay public for the running of hospitals, dispensaries, etc. (until the National Health Service took over), and all that the doctors did was to give their services free (in many such cases for purposes of further training in their own special line of medical work). Naturopaths should therefore not be expected to provide both the funds for Nature Cure clinics as well as the offer of free service, and

in the course of time we hope that much more will be done along this line than has been possible hitherto, as the Nature Cure public understands the real issues involved.

As regards my own personal affairs, in 1930 my brother got married, and thus severed a lifelong relationship that went much deeper than ordinary family ties; and at the time the loss to me was very great indeed. But I soon learnt that, if we try to put into the common pool of human living all that we are capable of giving, through our particular vocation or interest, *life* soon gives us something back in return; so that I made up for the loss of companionship of my brother by finding more ability and facility in expressing myself through my writing work.

I had early discovered that my ability to write came not from my conscious mind (or intellect) but from the more intuitive levels of myself. I never had to think beforehand about what I was going to say, as I presume many writers have to do. Everything seemed to come into my mind as I was writing, without conscious effort of any kind, and all I had to do was make my conscious self (and my brain) into a suitable channel for the expression of the thoughts and ideas in question. That meant I had just to sit before my typewriter with an empty sheet of paper in the machine, and with my conscious mind just as empty as the sheet, and let my *inner consciousness* dictate to me what to put on the paper before me. Needless to say this was a very satisfactory way of doing things from my own personal point of view, as it saved me having to think about the subject-matter of my writing beforehand. I left that all to my subconscious mind, which I always gave plenty of time to browse over the matter before the writing began, and all I had to do was turn myself into my own amanuensis when the time actually arrived for putting down on paper what my subconscious had to say.

I have consistently pursued that policy throughout all the years of my career as a protagonist of Nature Cure and allied

subjects, and later I discovered that this was the only way anyone could write *really creatively*, according to those who knew best about the subject of writing in general. One allowed one's subconscious to do all the necessary detailed work beforehand (which it can do far better than the conscious mind, because in the subconscious are stored all past knowledge and memories, etc.); then two other sets of factors came into operation when the actual writing work had to be done, *viz*, the inner creative urge for self-expression, and the conscious co-operation of intellect, brain and hands for the actual typing. Thus the process of writing was a truly unified one comprising spirit, mind and body, and the result—for what it was worth—was a real expression of inner creative power through the typewritten word.

In my own case I have derived the greatest joy of my life through writing, for by it I achieve my inner desire for creative self-expression. Thus I write both for the joy of it and for the outlet it provides for expressing my inner creative needs, and the monetary side is merely a subsidiary factor. I admit if I did not earn money by my writing I would not derive the satisfaction from it that I do, but the money side only provides the final satisfaction of knowing that through one's chosen creative field one can also earn one's livelihood at the same time. To me that is the crowning achievement of creative living, and being one of those favoured folk who are blessed in that direction, I never cease to give thanks to Providence for it. I regard it as a boon beyond price, and in consequence I try to make my contribution to the furtherance of the health and happiness of my fellow-man all that I can. For only so can I repay my debt to life for having placed me in such a favoured position.

In 1931, just at the time of the great world depression, my brother decided to go to New Zealand with his wife, to try to seek his fortune there. I felt this further severance of the deep ties that bound us very acutely indeed. But here again I found the same principle at work as before, and the greater

my personal loss was, the more did I find compensation through greater ability and facility in writing. Reasoning along these lines, it has always seemed to me that to be capable of the greatest degree of creative achievement, one must have suffered far more deeply than most men; and this assumption is amply borne out by the facts when one comes to read about the lives of the great creative artists and thinkers of humanity, not to speak of the great spiritual leaders. Suffering of soul and spirit inevitably go hand in hand with creative ability, and often suffering of mind and body as well. Even in my own somewhat insignificant case I found this natural law to operate, as with the truly great beings of the race.

My brother found that he had definitely chosen the worst time possible for trying to seek his fortune abroad, and returned to this country in 1932 with practically all his money spent and his wife expecting a baby. In those circumstances, until he could find work again, it fell upon me to support him, which I was only too glad to do considering what he had done for me in 1928-29 when I had used up all my resources. It took him some time to find suitable employment, but in due course he found his feet again, and the need for my financial assistance ceased. It was just after this that I decided it was about time my mother, sister and myself left North London for somewhere more congenial to live, and after one or two abortive efforts I eventually found myself the tenant of a house in the Hampstead Garden Suburb. This was a very welcome change indeed from our previous environment, and was the ideal solution to our problem. I would have liked to live entirely in the country, but my mother and sister did not want this. The Garden Suburb solved all our problems for us, as it was in London yet almost as though it were in the heart of the country.

The Garden Suburb was the crowning achievement of the late Dame Henrietta Barnett, to whose vision and foresight it owed its inception and development; and I for one could



never have wished for a better part to live in, assuming one *had* to live in London. It was within a stone's throw of Hampstead Heath, and the arrangement of its streets and houses was picturesque and delightful in the extreme, with flowers, trees and green spaces everywhere. Bird-life was as abundant as in the country, and at last I had the pleasure of hearing blackbirds, thrushes, robins, chaffinches, etc., singing in my own garden; something that I had wanted for many years now.

At the Institute, in the Hampstead Garden Suburb, they had many evening activities, and I took up country dancing there, which I had learnt to like when down at the guest house near Haslemere. It was a fine form of mental relaxation and physical activity combined, and I spent many pleasant evenings learning country dancing at the Institute (and later at the Folk Dancing Society Headquarters, Cecil Sharp House, Regent's Park). I found that to make a good country dancer one had to have a very good memory as well as agility of foot and body, and as I had always been the possessor of an excellent memory this stood me in good stead here. Eventually I became the secretary of our Folk Dance Class, and did quite some advanced dancing at various gatherings, rallies, etc.; but when the war broke out in 1939 and I left the Garden Suburb I found less and less opportunity for country dancing, and gave it up altogether, eventually, much to my own regret.

Although Nature Cure was my main interest in life, it was by no means my only one in the mental field. It has never been my way to confine myself to one particular study, and my range has been as wide as I can make it, and as time will allow me to read and ponder over the various subjects that appeal to me. Philosophy, psychology, and scientific work of a philosophical character (such as that of Jeans, Eddington, Dunne, etc.) have always interested me, as well as music, art and good literature generally (including books on history, travel, biography, and current political and economic

affairs); so that there was always plenty to occupy my mind, apart from my actual Nature Cure work. I can appreciate the attitude of mind of Naturopaths who regard Nature Cure as the be-all and end-all of their existence. They consider they have dedicated their lives to its service, and in and through that service they find every possible satisfaction of their mind and spirit. But I happen to be of a different type, and variety of interest has always seemed to me to be essential to a balanced outlook on life and the world at large. This has not meant a diminution of my interest in Nature Cure, but a broadening of it really; as I have always tried to relate it to life as a whole, and not regard it as something apart from other things.

That is why I felt the urge to correlate my general philosophical and psychological ideas with those of Nature Cure and write a book about the subject. I wanted to do this from about 1935 onwards, but found it impossible to devote the necessary time to the matter. I could see it was going to be a big job, and at times I felt I would never secure the opportunity to get on with it. By 1939 I had succeeded in getting about one chapter completed, and it was only the outbreak of the war and its resultant disorganisation of my accustomed activities that enabled me to go ahead with the writing of the book and get it completed during the years 1939-44 down at Worthing. I decided to call the book *How to Live for Health and Happiness*, and I meant to put everything I knew into it. It managed to get into print in 1948. But it has not been such a commercial success as my other books. I can only conclude that for every hundred persons who are interested in getting back health of body, there are only about ten vitally interested in the health and welfare of the mind and spirit inhabiting that body.

As time went on I contacted various medical men through my writings, and I soon learnt that there were quite a number of doctors who had a leaning towards Nature Cure and believed in its philosophy, although they preferred not to say

so openly, for obvious reasons. The British Medical Association ruled the medical world with an autocratic hand, and what it said officially had to be subscribed to by its members in public, even though they might disagree in private with its judgments and pronouncements. Thus it was that many doctors spoke with two voices about Nature Cure. In public they said it was a lot of quackery, but in private they admitted there was quite a lot of value in it. It was precisely the same with osteopathy, etc. Of course, there have been some really outstandingly courageous medical men who have gone right over to the unorthodox fold and renounced entirely their orthodox allegiance; but they are a very small minority, unfortunately. In general, Nature Cure has had to (and must continue to) face considerable and bitter opposition from the medical profession, especially from its accredited leaders, which to the unbiased observer must surely be an indication of the worth of Nature Cure methods. If Nature Cure was indeed pure "quackery," as many medical men assert, then there would be surely no need to fear its advance? But the fact that the medical profession do fear it, and its effect on their own prestige and position in the public eye, shows only too clearly that in Nature Cure medical science has a rival which it has enough cause to fear as well as to hate.

I have sometimes been brought to task by readers of my books and articles for "violently and needlessly attacking the medical profession." It has never been my policy to attack doctors as *individuals*, only as members of a profession whose basic philosophy is false, and whose methods have done more to undermine the physical well-being of their patients than have the actual diseases they suffer from. It is this false body of doctrine and the fallacious treatment measures built up on it that I have consistently attacked and will continue to attack, not individual doctors at all. I fully realise that they are doing the best they can for their patients, and it is only ignorance and not maliciousness that causes them to fail so dismally in their task (where the results of their methods

are assessed by *real health standards*).

I point all this out to people who write to me in this vein, and show them that unless the false assumptions underlying medical science are exposed, it will be impossible to make the public understand the real value of Nature Cure. Nature Cure is not just another form of therapeutics that can be used in conjunction with orthodox medicine, as can physiotherapy, massage, etc. It is something entirely different from, *and antagonistic to*, the basic medical philosophy; and until that philosophy is exposed in its true light, the public will be quite unable to see Nature Cure as it really is: namely, *the only truly natural and logical method of disease-treatment extant*. One must destroy the stranglehold over the public mind that medical science has before the truth about Nature Cure can be made clear to all. That is why I attack the medical profession and its methods in my writings. I do not just tear down merely for the sake of destroying. I do so to pave the way for something far better and nobler to take its place in the field of healing.

It has often surprised me to know how many doctors have bought my books, and none of them has ever thought of taking me to task for attacking their profession and its methods. It is only certain members of the public who do this, in the mistaken belief that I am trying to launch a personal attack on doctors generally. Nothing could be further from the truth, as I hope these remarks will have made abundantly clear.

In 1936 my sister got married and so there were only my mother and myself left at home. As I was the eldest of the family I began to think seriously about the possibility of getting married myself some day. However, I always held it in my mind that if and when the right time came the right person would appear, so left it at that for the moment. I met many attractive and cultured young women at my country dancing and elsewhere, but never came across one that I could imagine as my wife; and in any case I never saw myself

as the average married man with a family. I always felt that even if I got married it would never be to raise a family, but only for the purpose of doing more effective work for humanity than I could achieve alone. And thus it came to pass, eventually, as I shall relate in the next chapter.

Since the time I became a vegetarian in 1926, I have stayed at many vegetarian guest houses, and sampled many kinds of vegetarian meals, and I have to confess that the type of food I often got at such places was very bad. The people who ran them seemed to know nothing at all about making their meals well balanced dietetically, and the result was the most unappetising mixtures of starches and proteins it was possible to get in place of the meat dishes non-vegetarians were used to. No attempt was even made to serve salads every day at many such places, let alone attractively prepared ones, and fruit was often only conspicuous by its absence; yet some had the effrontery to call themselves "Diet Reform guest houses"! Their knowledge of real Diet Reform was about nil, judging from the results of their catering efforts. Of course there were really good vegetarian guest houses where one could obtain delightful Diet Reform meals, with plenty of fresh fruit and salads daily, but it was only when one had sampled them all that one could decide which were the good and which the bad. After a time I made it a point of never booking at a vegetarian guest house without actually seeing what it was like beforehand, and this caution paid me in the end. I avoided some of those rather painful experiences I had run into previously.

I feel it is only right to make public these facts, despite the angry protestations of certain hard-boiled vegetarians, who still regard the quintessence of vegetarianism as being the not eating of "flesh, fish or fowl," and as having nothing whatsoever to do with the proper combination and balancing of foods, to form a health-promoting dietary. I hope that what I have had to say on this issue during the years has done something to redress the balance in favour of a more

enlightened attitude to Diet Reform in the minds of many vegetarian guest-house keepers and manageresses in particular. When people come to such places and get not only poor food but atrociously combined meals, as I have personally experienced more than once, it only gives the whole vegetarian movement a bad name, and does no one any good. There is nothing more delightful than really attractive vegetarianism when based on sound Diet Reform principles; there can be nothing worse than old-style vegetarian cooking and catering with its stodgy and messy dishes in place of meat, its heavy puddings, and its neglect of all dietetic standards.

I speak with a certain amount of feeling on this particular issue, because I used to plan my annual holidays so as to spend one portion by myself in the country, and the other portion with my mother at different vegetarian guest houses;\* so that I know only too well the pitfalls that lie in wait for the unwary traveller in those fields. Whenever I went away on my own I rarely if ever stayed at guest houses of any kind, and generally managed to get the type and variety of food I wanted. There can be no doubt at all of the growing interest in Diet Reform that existed in the 1930s, and it is very much greater these days than ever before. Vegetarians of the old school can hinder that growing public interest in Diet Reform very greatly by their own personal attitude, and can call down nothing but contempt on the whole vegetarian movement at the same time. With regard to *Vegans*, if such folk can live healthily on a vegetarian diet excluding eggs, cheese, milk, butter and honey, all I can say is good luck to them! I cannot do without such foods myself.

To sum up, it can be said that the ten years from September, 1929, to September, 1939, were a period of steady

\*Despite my mother's tearful opposition to my adoption of vegetarian feeding in 1926, she soon became a convert herself, and has remained a strict vegetarian for the remainder of her life, with nothing but good results as regards her own health and longevity.

maturity and development, and increasing knowledge and experience of Nature Cure in its practical application to the treatment of disease. But all the time I had the feeling, as I mentioned in the opening paragraphs of this chapter, that the more I learnt the less I really knew. As my knowledge and understanding expanded, so I realised the vastly greater wisdom there was still to acquire before one could be a real master in those domains relative to the treatment of disease covered by the term "Nature Cure methods."

It was not the basic principles that needed adjusting as knowledge increased; they were right for all time. It was the ever-growing range of subjects that encroached into the field of Natural Healing that was the stumbling-block. One felt that there was no end to what one *ought* to know, but *time and tide waited for no man*, and it was no use attempting the impossible. One learnt what one could, at the time at one's disposal, and by applying that added knowledge in one's work a further contribution was made to the improvement of the health of suffering humanity to whose well-being one had dedicated one's life. A little knowledge well applied was worth far more than a lot of knowledge ill-digested and used indiscriminately here and there, I felt, where one's fellow-humans were concerned!

## THE WAR YEARS

THE years from 1929 to 1939 dealt with in the last chapter can best be regarded as a period of increasing mechanisation, noise and speed, when viewed in relation to the life of this country as a whole. The process was summarised vividly in my mind when I came across an old-world hamlet one day whilst walking in the country not far from Hatfield in Hertfordshire. This hamlet was completely off the beaten track, and seemed sunk fast in the somnolence of the past, with its hoary thatched cottages and ancient smithy; yet not two hundred yards away a by-pass road could be heard which carried a constant stream of motor traffic to the north, and within a mile or so was an airfield belonging to one of the largest aviation construction firms in the country.

These were, of course, quite recent innovations, made in the name of "progress," and the result was this sleepy old-world hamlet was now bathed in a constant stream of noise day in and day out, from motor-cars, lorries, and aeroplanes, so that everything it stood for aesthetically was completely shattered. It made a very deep impression on me at the time, and symbolised perfectly the period we were then passing through. It was a time when all values of a non-commercial or non-cash convertibility were completely ignored in the rush for material gain, and its effect on the inner life of the nation was profound.

During this period I spent a fortnight's walking holiday in Brittany with my brother, visited the "Mary Webb" country in Shropshire (because of my interest in her novels), and had holidays in Guernsey, the Lake District, the Yorkshire Moors, Cornwall, the Gower Peninsular in Wales, the Isle of Mull and the Porlock-Minehead country during various years, all



of which I enjoyed very much indeed in their various ways. I also had the good fortune to spend a month at the old-world village of Thakeham in Sussex at a thatched and timbered cottage redolent with the peace of past centuries.

These were all pleasant interludes in my Nature Cure work, as were the many walking tours I undertook at other odd times during those years, many of which still linger as fragrant memories laden with the smells, sights and sounds of the countryside. On one such occasion I nearly lost my life, when trying to clamber up the side of a high river gorge in Devonshire, because my way along the river bed was blocked by large rocks. The hillside was far steeper than I had estimated, and it was touch and go whether I would reach the top or not. Any moment I felt I would be hurtled to the roaring torrent below, and it was a very near shave indeed. When I at length reached the top in safety, and threw myself down exhausted on the grass, I gave fervent thanks to Providence for having saved me from a rather painful and watery end! But evidently it was not my time to go, and through the years I have had similar experiences when it seemed that something was watching over me and extended a helping hand when most needed, at times of crisis, whether material or otherwise.

It gave me the feeling that there was some vital work I was destined to do in the world, however small in range as compared with that of those of greater mind and creative vision; and I certainly do feel a sense of *purpose* in my day-to-day existence, however humdrum it may seem to be at times when judged from purely objective standards. Through the years it has constantly been my endeavour to transmute that purpose into the work I am doing, both literary and otherwise. It is work that has a blessing on it, in my own view, because it is for the betterment of mankind, and far transcends that of the average medico, not only for the positive results secured, but because it teaches people certain much-needed lessons. It shows them that if they wish to be

healthy they must live in conformity with Nature's Laws, and it moreover gives them the understanding of how that co-operation is to be effected. Thus they become co-workers with Nature, in building up their own health of mind and body.

It is therefore work of real positive creative value, apart from the actual curing of disease that is effected. When we contrast this result with that of orthodox medicine, the profundity of the difference is startling. All that medical science teaches suffering humanity is to fear germs and rely solely on "the doctor" to cure it of its ills. No positive constructive effort is made towards helping the average man or woman to heal themselves; they are made to feel completely powerless before the constantly threatening onslaught of the germs which *orthodox medicine tells them to be always in fear of*, and the health-consciousness which the National Health Service was supposed to develop in the public mind is merely a continuing reliance upon drugs and sera and the latest fads in medical science, as before!

It was thoughts such as these that occupied my mind much of the time during these years, coupled later with the desire to get on with my new book *How to Live for Health and Happiness*, a desire which was constantly being thwarted by the pressure of day-to-day events. So when the war broke out in September, 1939, I felt I had come to the end of an epoch and was commencing something entirely new, albeit fraught with considerable financial peril to myself. The future looked very doubtful indeed after ten years of increasing financial stability, and at first I thought I was going to be stranded altogether in my Nature Cure work. But fate decreed otherwise, and my work kept on albeit at a considerably reduced tempo. I decided to retrench as much as possible as regards living expenses, and in view of possible bombing attacks I made up my mind to leave London, as I did not feel it right to expose my mother to such experiences at her age.

I did not quite know where to go, and eventually decided on Worthing, which was a place I had visited several times previously and had always liked. It was quiet and pleasant and not too far from London, and not at all like noisy Brighton. It also had many amenities which endeared it to me from past associations such as its close proximity to Cissbury Ring and Chanctonbury Ring on the South Downs, the old-world villages of Findon, Clapham and Patching, flower-strewn Clapham Woods, Arundel with its Castle and lovely park, etc. I had more than once said in the past that I could live at Worthing, although I had never at the time thought I should ever do so. But now the moment had evidently arrived for putting into concrete form my previous feelings about the place, and I accordingly went down there one day with my brother, at the end of September, 1939, to see what I could find. The prospects were not very encouraging, and my brother left me to go on to Brighton for some business he had to transact there with the remark that my quest seemed hopeless. But fate was on my side in the end, and eventually I found myself the tenant of a flat at a very moderate rental which was just the sort of place I wanted for the time being, until I knew the way events were likely to turn out with regard to the war. I had complete faith that we would come through successfully, as in the 1914-18 war, but I little knew at the time that Worthing was destined soon to become a "front line" town after the débâcle in France in May-June, 1940, and that I was to have a grandstand view of the Battle of Britain.

The decrease in my Nature Cure work gave me just the opportunity that I needed to push ahead with my new book, and I seized the chance with avidity. Indeed, the first draft was completed on 10th May, 1940—on the very day that Hitler sent his hordes against the Dutch, Belgians and French with such catastrophic results to those three countries (and ourselves). I remember distinctly that I had just arrived at the very end of the final chapter when our milkman told

us that Hitler had invaded Holland and Belgium that morning, and a feeling of deep foreboding shot right through me. I knew it was going to be a serious business, and as disaster followed disaster in those wonderful May and June days of blazing sunshine, I began to wonder more and more whether it was worth my while going on with the book at all. I knew that if the Germans landed on the south coast (as was their intention that summer) it would be all up with me as a "non-Aryan," and although I did not fear this so much for myself, I did for my mother, and did not quite know what to do for the best.

Relatives urged us to leave Worthing and go to a safer area, but I decided to stick it out in the end, and face the consequences whatever they might be, and I was very glad later that I came to that decision. I also decided that as I had plenty of time on my hands I might just as well go ahead with my new book, and spent the "touch and go" years from 1940 to 1942 in revising the manuscript, retyping, etc. (When I said in the last chapter that I never had to think beforehand about what I was going to write, and that my writing was quite effortless, it must not be imagined from this that there was no revising and touching up necessary. Once the main writing had been done, in the manner described, there was always plenty of work to do in tightening up the sentences, putting in ideas which had since come to mind, and sometimes rewriting whole paragraphs, etc. This revision took me two years because of the size of the book and the rather difficult nature of the subject-matter in certain chapters, which I endeavoured to make as simply understandable to the reader as I possibly could.)

Thus my time was fully occupied mentally, and I found plenty of opportunity for country walking in the district, so that my presence became a byword in the surrounding countryside and suspicions were aroused more than once that I was a "German spy"! Otherwise why should I always be walking about the country, the rustics argued? It was quite

a common experience for me to be asked for my identity card by military and police whilst walking about with my rucksack, and although I resented this I fully appreciated that I certainly did look a rather suspicious character. But it always seemed to me absurd to assume that if one was really a German spy one would make oneself as conspicuous as I did. Surely one would try to make oneself as *inconspicuous* as possible? But the average military and police intelligence evidently did not go as far as that! Such flights of deductive logic were far beyond it, in the stress of existing circumstances.

Things kept on at a very low ebb financially from September, 1939, to August, 1941, when suddenly a complete change in my fortunes occurred. My book *Better Sight Without Glasses* was mentioned by Julian Huxley on the B.B.C. Brains Trust, and sales rocketed immediately, with excellent repercussions on the sales of my other books. Soon I found myself earning in royalties far more than I had ever done in the pre-war years. Also in the same month *Health for All* decided to return to Henrietta Street from its wartime hide-out near Champneys, Tring, and advice work immediately began to increase, too.\*

The same month of August also brought me a letter from someone in California who had read my book on eyes and wished to thank me for the benefit she had derived from it, and that was my first contact with my future wife! The letter was headed "Theosophical International Headquarters, Point Loma, California," and I immediately thought it was the same society over which Mrs. Besant had held sway for so many years assisted by C. W. Leadbeater. I accordingly

\* The production of the magazine throughout the whole of the war years, without the missing of a single issue, was itself an epic story of courageous faith and grim determination. Stanley Lief and John Wood faced and surmounted all obstacles so that the message of hope *Health for All* brought to suffering humanity each month should not flag or falter. Every praise is due to them in this great achievement, despite a sadly depleted staff, paper shortages, etc.

wrote back thanking the writer for her kind appreciation of my book and mentioned that I had had some experience of Theosophy in 1926-27 and was not at all struck with what I had encountered. I said I believed in *Reincarnation* and *Karma*, the two chief Theosophical doctrines, as I could not see how life could be explained without them; but as regards the rest, I felt that there was a far too psychic and "other worldly" atmosphere about Theosophy which I did not care for in the least.

I dismissed the matter from my mind at the time, but in due course I received a reply agreeing with what I had said about my experience with Theosophy, and pointing out that the society which the writer belonged to was not the same one that had been presided over by Mrs. Besant, and had an entirely different attitude to the subject. It was explained to me that the Point Loma Society kept strictly to the teachings of Madame Blavatsky as put forward in her writings, especially *The Secret Doctrine*, and did not countenance in the least the deviations and perversions of this body of teaching which Mrs. Besant and her associate C. W. Leadbeater had put before the Western World as Theosophy.

This was indeed rather startling and interesting news, because I had always felt I would like to read *The Secret Doctrine* ever since I had first heard about it in 1926 at the guest house in the Cotswolds. And to have my own views about Theosophy and Theosophists confirmed by someone whom I thought would be bound to take offence at what I had said made me determined to find out more about the matter. This led to a study of the basic Theosophical teachings (as expressed in the writings of Madame Blavatsky, W. Q. Judge and Dr. G. de Purucker, then head of the Point Loma Society), from which I emerged, after a period of time, with the firm conviction that Theosophy was absolutely *right* as far as I was concerned, as regards its interpretation of Life and the Cosmos, and that all I had found cause to disagree with or dislike previously was due to the failure of

others either to interpret correctly, or to put into practice, the fundamental Theosophical doctrines.

I felt that my future was now as definitely bound up with Theosophy as it was with that of Nature Cure, and it was my duty to champion its cause just as fully as I had the latter since the days of my conversion to the Nature Cure philosophy. I felt I had to do this despite (and indeed *because* of) the misunderstandings of the public about the matter (in which I had previously shared!), and despite (or again *because* of) the gross blunders made by Mrs. Besant's society in their presentation of the subject, which had done so much to cause that distrust of Theosophy which existed so widely in the public mind.

Earlier in 1941 some curiosity had prompted me to attend a few of the services at the Spiritualist Church in Worthing, just to see the sort of thing that went on there. And although I could see at a glance that as a definite philosophy purporting to explain life and the hereafter Spiritualism was very amateurish indeed, nevertheless it seemed to me quite impossible to deny the facts of survival (and the truth of psychic phenomena) put forward by the speakers at the meetings, and as recounted in Spiritualist literature. There was a large lending library connected with the Church, and I made such good use of this that the president of the Church remarked one day that "I must be very fond of reading"! Rather surprisedly I learnt that very few Spiritualists read anything very much about the subject; they were quite content with the bare facts of survival as presented at the meetings, in séances, etc., and what that fact meant to them in terms of possible contact with departed relatives and friends. So that someone who really read the literature was rather a rarity!

The more I read about the subject, however, the less could I see it as anything worthy of serious consideration as regards a really satisfactory philosophy relative to the Cosmos and man, and my interest rapidly waned. But not before I had had a rather remarkable experience at what was called a

"flower reading." I was asked if I would like to attend this, and out of curiosity said I would. I was told to pick a flower in the morning of the "flower reading" and wear this in my buttonhole, and then when I came to the meeting it was taken from me and placed on a small slab of wood with a number on it. There were about thirty other people present, and the flowers which they had been wearing were similarly placed on numbered slabs. The proceedings began when the medium arrived on the platform. She was evidently in a trance and took each flower in turn from its slab, called out the number so that the person to whom the flower belonged would know it was his flower she was dealing with, and then proceeded to give what was called a "psychometric reading" (for which the recipient paid the token fee of 1s.).

During the course of the reading the medium called out what she could tell clairvoyantly about the owner of each flower, and when it came to my own turn I confess I had the surprise of my life. The medium did not know who I was or anything about me, but she said right away that I had had (or still had) some eye trouble which had been very serious, but that now my sight was much better than it had been. She also said that I was engaged in literary work of some kind and was at present working on something (my new book obviously) about which I was not at all sure of the future prospects, and she at once assured me the book would be completed and published in due course of time and be of very great help to many thousands of people. (This news I was very thankful to receive at the time in view of the prevailing conditions existing in 1941.) The medium also told me I would become very deeply interested in esoteric and occult matters, and would gain a wide knowledge of the subject, which would have a big effect on my future life, and that in this connection I was soon coming in contact with a woman of about middle age, who lived in another country, through whose influence I would make the necessary moves in the direction in question. The medium stressed that the



lady concerned would come into my life through what she called "an open door" (of which she confessed she could not herself quite understand the significance), and it at once occurred to me that this "open door" was my book *Better Sight Without Glasses*. For through that book I had a sort of "open door" through which people all over the world could contact me through my publishers, as many of them assuredly did.

This "flower reading" took place early in July, 1941, and the letter that started my correspondence with Miss Savage arrived at the end of August. So after I got further letters from California which led to my taking up a real study of Theosophy, the words of the medium recurred to my mind, and my interest in the writer of those letters increased accordingly. I felt I would like to find out more about her, and especially her age, as the medium had specifically referred to a lady of about "middle age" (which should be somewhere in the forties). I therefore continued my correspondence with Miss Savage (whom I found out in due course was the private secretary of Dr. de Purucker, the head of the Society, and had accompanied him on several lecture tours in Europe) and eventually learnt that she was forty-four years old (my age at the time being forty-five). This seemed to me to be a definite confirmation of what the medium had foretold at the "flower reading," and another experience I had had at the end of 1939, soon after coming to live at Worthing, also seemed to bear on the same subject.

At that time, the future looking very bleak indeed, I noticed one afternoon an advertisement from a palmist in Worthing who seemed rather different from the "catch-penny" variety, so I thought I would just see what she could tell me about my future prospects—just for fun, as it were. When I called to see her she scrutinised me very carefully before offering to read my hands, and I could see she was not out for just making money by her profession but regarded it more as an art which she was only willing to employ on

behalf of really earnest and intelligent seekers after knowledge of their personal affairs. She said the charge would be 5s., and when I left her an hour later I certainly felt she had fully earned her fee, and that I had had a remarkable five bobs' worth!

The palmist assured me from my hand-reading that I had nothing to fear about the future, and that although I might be in for a rather thin time financially, things would soon begin to improve and that my work would go on uninterruptedly. She also said (without having asked me if I was married or not) that I would get married when I was about forty-seven, and that my future wife would be about a year younger than myself and engaged on work of importance to humanity in general, which she would continue when married. At the time I did not pay much attention to this, in relation to the many other things the palmist told me, but she also said it was possible my future wife would be a doctor, as a doctor was somehow mixed up in the business. (She admitted to me after the reading that her work was done mainly by clairvoyance and not actually palmistry, although she used the hand as a basis for her forecasts; and that was why she could say all these things about my future which were not the usual sort of prognostications one associates with palmists.) The point here is that when Miss Savage of California first began to correspond with me she called me Dr. Benjamin, and continued to do so right up to the time she came over to this country in 1943, when I made her understand that Naturopaths were not regarded as doctors in England, although they were recognised as such in America. Thus the word "doctor" kept on appearing in our correspondence, which bore out the prediction made by the palmist on this point, in regard to my future marriage, also our two ages. Thus I had two divergent sources which seemed to bear on my possible future relationship with Miss Savage, thereby further increasing my keen interest in her which had developed through our correspondence.

In view of what I have been saying about the "flower reading" and the palmist, I hope the reader will not gain the impression that I am one of those folk who are always dabbling in horoscopes, numerology, crystal-gazing and such-like attempts to throw light on the future! But I do feel that the events and circumstances related were sufficiently unusual to warrant my considered interest in what they had to say; and, incidentally, I have the greatest respect for astrology when practised by one really well versed in the art. I do not regard it as "fortune-telling" at all when used by a real master, but prediction of the most useful value to the individual concerned. After all, it is surely rather startling to discover that merely from the date and time of one's birth a good astrologer can tell you so much about your own personal disposition, capabilities and possibilities; so that there *must* be a definite relationship between every individual and the planets that circle in the heavens above us. This, of course, is a truth that occultism confirms and explains, but the average materialist-minded man or woman is not prepared to accept such confirmation, and the "fortune-telling" aspects of astrology have done much to bring it into disrepute—a disrepute it does *not* deserve, in my mind, when used by a real master of the art.

It seemed from the two experiences referred to, then, that the advent of Miss Elsie Savage into my life was no accidental thing, but something fore-ordained and part of the Cosmic Life-Plan. And as it was through her I had discovered the *real Theosophy* I had so nearly missed altogether, through my previous unfortunate contact with the Adyar Society (of which Mrs. Besant had been president), and as this real Theosophy meant as much to me in its way—if not more—than Nature Cure did in its way, I felt that fate was definitely working towards a closer relationship between Miss Savage and myself. However, I learnt from her letters that she felt her duty lay in devoting herself to the service of her employer (Dr. de Purucker) who—as already said—was the head

of the Point Loma Society, and a distinguished esotericist and author, so that the prospects of my ever meeting her in this country under the existing war conditions were very remote. I had learnt from her that she was English and not American (as I had at first thought), although she had spent nearly all her life in California, and her patriotism was pronounced in the extreme, judging by what she had to say about this country, Churchill, etc.

Then, in September, 1942, I heard that Dr. de Purucker had quite suddenly and unexpectedly died from a heart attack (soon after the headquarters had been moved from Point Loma to Covina, California), and that immediately put an entirely different complexion on things. The way seemed clear at last for Miss Savage to come over to England (if she felt she wanted to do this, and if she could get the necessary permission and was ready to face the U-boats)! This course I repeatedly urged her to take, as by that time I felt convinced our future lay inevitably together in helping humanity along our destined lines of work. (She, too, was vitally interested in Nature Cure and Diet Reform, I had discovered, during the course of our correspondence, although life at the Theosophical headquarters did not always permit of their full application).

In March, 1943, we took the seemingly foolhardy step of becoming engaged, without our having met in the flesh, and by June of that year it was decided she would come to England at the first opportunity. Meanwhile everything was left in the lap of the gods to work out one way or the other. The remarkable thing to note here was that Elsie had brothers and sisters who had all taken out American citizenship papers, but she had clung tenaciously to her own English nationality, because she always wanted to come back to this country eventually; and it was this fact which weighed on our side in the end and enabled her to get her sailing permission to leave the United States in October, 1943, in convoy for England (her tenth crossing of the Atlantic).

Everything went off safely, and she eventually arrived early in November, and came to live with my mother and myself at our flat in Worthing until our marriage in December at the local registry office. Our ages at the time were forty-seven and forty-six respectively, a complete confirmation of the palmist's prediction on this point four years previously. No doubt the whole thing seemed reckless in the extreme, and smacked strongly of adolescent romanticism, but I can assure the reader it was no such thing. We were both so sure that what we were doing was *right*, that we had no doubts about the matter at all. Future events certainly seem to have borne out our intuitions.

Naturally it was not too easy at first to get things into smooth running order between two people who had never had the opportunity of getting to know each other gradually over a period of time, as in the case of most intending married couples; but the underlying motive being one of united service to humanity through our chosen work in life, all superficial clashing of temperament were gradually overcome, and a lasting basis for real married harmony was established which has become ever stronger through the years. With regard to such necessary adjustments of temperament as had to be made, I was the main culprit no doubt, as my nature is not quite such an easy one to understand and get along with at first. On Elsie's side there was much that was strange (and that needed getting used to) in coming to live in this country in the midst of the war, with its black-out, rationing, etc. (Incidentally, she had no fear of bombing, and the crossing of the Atlantic in face of the U-boat peril did not deter her in the slightest. She rather enjoyed the experience, she told me!)

In those early days of our married life we both learnt many lessons that have stood us in good stead since, and the chief lesson has been the realisation that for husband and wife to live a fully harmonious life together it is essential for each to allow the other the full development of his or

her own nature, and to work from that basis towards marital unity. Instead of one trying to force his or her will upon the other, and make that other conform to a pattern of living that he or she thinks the other *should* or *ought* to follow, as is the case in so many marriages (with corresponding disastrous results in many instances), Elsie and I learnt that we had to allow each other to develop our characters and temperaments *in our own ways*, and from that basis allow things to adjust themselves *naturally* so as to ensure *maximum* harmony. By so doing we were each being true to our own inherent natures, and the superficial difficulties soon began to disappear as we each learnt to respect the other for *what we really were*. Ideas that had been built up previously of what each was like or *ought to be like* were erased in favour of the reality that each was. It was only on such a basis that real affection and esteem could flourish, and it is only on such a basis that any marriage can be a lasting success, no matter what the feeling of attachment between the partners concerned may be at the time of betrothal.

Such discoveries are the essence of real and enduring marital happiness, and only on such a "give and take" basis can maximum harmony develop, and rest secure on a foundation of mutual respect and affection.

At first we had thought that when Elsie came over here she would help me in my writing activities, as she was a skilled shorthand-typist and used to all kinds of secretarial work; but events worked out otherwise, and before long we had decided to insert an advertisement in *Health for All* giving details of a Theosophical correspondence course Elsie was prepared to inaugurate. There was to be no charge for the course, but intending students had to be prepared to pay the postage of any books loaned. The advertisement appeared in the February, 1944, issue of the magazine, and was an immediate success. The course has kept on ever since, and has claimed many hundreds of students, a goodly proportion of whom have become members of the Theosophical Society as

a result (the Covina Society of which Elsie and myself are members, not the Adyar Society of course). As the members brought into the society through the agency of the correspondence course were widely scattered throughout the country, it was decided to band them together in what was called the "Corresponding Fellows' Lodge," and a monthly bulletin was issued under Elsie's editorship to which members sent in contributions for discussion and comment by other members, on Theosophical topics of mutual interest. This venture has been a great success. Thus my wife's Theosophical work has gone on from strength to strength, along entirely new and novel lines, and my own small part in the matter has been to help out financially where necessary and be the president of the Lodge formed by my wife's efforts.

We have made many new and enduring friendships through the contacts thus formed, and many of the students and members have come down to Worthing to visit us from time to time. As our society is only a small one as compared with the Adyar Society, we cannot compete with them as regards palatial premises for headquarters in this country, large provincial centres, etc., so that the work Elsie does through her correspondence course and the Corresponding Fellows' Lodge is of vital importance to our organisation here. Since her arrival in England in November, 1943, my wife has been back and forth to California twice at the request of the new head of the society, Col. A. L. Conger, in relation to her Theosophical activities, and we both look forward to the future with confidence as regards the spread of the real Theosophical teachings in Great Britain.

It was in order to help forward the work my wife was doing that I decided to write my book *Everybody's Guide to Theosophy*, in 1946-47, and its companion volume *Facing Life Squarely*, a year or so later, both of which have been published by the Health for All Publishing Co., as a sort of token of their appreciation of the success my Nature Cure books have achieved for them. This does not mean that there

is any direct relationship between Nature Cure and Theosophy, or that *Health for All*, as a Nature Cure magazine, endorses my theosophical views. They are my own personal views and nothing more. I myself, however, *do* see a vital and dynamic relationship between Nature Cure and Theosophy, in the sense that they are both concerned with the laws of Nature and man's understanding of and adherence to them; but whereas Nature Cure deals primarily with the physical body, Theosophy deals with the spiritual factors in man's constitution. Thus the real underlying unity of philosophical outlook between Nature Cure and Theosophy is lost sight of by those who regard them from their superficial aspect only. I do not complain about this; nor do I wish to force Nature Cure adherents to become Theosophists. But the fact remains that many Nature Curists *have* become Theosophists through my own and my wife's efforts, simply because they saw in the one the logical and inevitable development on higher planes of the other. Having sampled for themselves the benefits of Nature Cure, as regards the health of the physical body, they were only too willing to see what the Theosophical teachings could do for the health and well-being of their minds and souls. I do not think the great majority of them have been disappointed in their quest—far from it!

It soon became apparent that we could not live on at the flat with three of us there, so in October, 1944, we decided to look round for a house in Worthing and see if we could find something suitable. What we wanted was somewhere quiet and secluded, with a nice garden and sunny rooms, and Elsie wanted a house without fireplaces but electrically heated, as she detested the work and dirt associated with coal. She also said, rather wistfully, that she would like an apple-tree or two in the garden, if good fortune should lead that way; and another idea of hers was that she would like to have an old Sussex wall around the house instead of a wooden fence or hedges, as she had fallen in love with the old flint



walls of the neighbourhood which are a relic of the skilled masonry work of past Sussex building craftsmen. When one considers our wants (or rather hopes!) as enumerated above, and when one further considers the dearth of houses existing at the time, and the price of them, the odds against our getting anything like what we desired were very considerable to say the least. But the fact remains that we got not only what we wanted, but something far surpassing anything we could have hoped for, even in our wildest flights of imagination. Fate was surely on our side there!

Owing to the largely increased sales of my books, as a result of the reference to *Better Sight Without Glasses* by Julian Huxley on the "Brains Trust," I had managed to save a tidy sum of money since August 1941, and I ascertained from my bank manager that he would be prepared to advance me as much again as I already possessed in Savings Bonds, etc., in order to buy a house; but when we went about to view available properties we had a rude shock. Not only were prices prohibitive, but the houses for sale were disappointing in the extreme. We felt quite despondent after only one afternoon's effort at house-viewing, and our hopes of securing what we wanted seemed very slim indeed. However, when we got home from our house-hunting expedition, I suggested that we should look in the local paper to see if anything suitable was advertised there. We did not really expect to find anything, but at least it was worth trying. We accordingly went through the list of houses for sale in its columns and came across one that seemed just the sort of thing we were after—if we could believe what was said about it in the advertisement! It was for private sale, not through the hands of any agent, and we were asked to write to a box number in the newspaper. We did this without much hope of getting a reply, but to our surprise we had an answer right away asking us to telephone a certain number in the district, from which we learnt that the house was in Upper Brighton Road, and giving us an appointment to view it and talk matters over with the owner.

I had always regarded Upper Brighton Road as the very best residential area in Worthing, and Elsie and I had often admired the houses in it. Therefore we were more than pleased to think this house was in that very road, although our pleasure was tempered with apprehension as to the final outcome.

It so happened that in 1943 a land-mine exploded near Broadwater Green, close to Upper Brighton Road, on the outskirts of Worthing, and caused considerable damage to property there, and as we went to view the house in question we discovered to our dismay that it was in the very part where the damage from the land-mine had occurred. We saw places where houses had been, and others where single walls were standing, and began to wonder whether anything would be left of the house at all that we had to view! But when we at length arrived there we gave a gasp of relief (and satisfaction). It had a few reminders of the blast of the land-mine in the form of damaged front-gate posts, lost garden fences, etc., but the house itself seemed quite intact, and not only so, it seemed very well preserved. As we were shown over it our pleasure and admiration increased more and more, as it was in truth the very ideal of what we had wanted. When at length we were taken to view the garden we were both struck quite speechless with surprise. This was indeed the garden of our imagination! It was most originally and artistically planned and laid out, and extended over a quarter of an acre, with a Cumberland turf lawn, and a vegetable garden containing not the one or two apple trees Elsie had wistfully hoped for, but over twenty of them (all in good bearing condition), as well as two Victoria plum trees, and a fine old pear tree. There were also fine beds of currant bushes, both black and red, raspberry canes, strawberries, gooseberries, rhubarb, and plenty of herbs and vegetables all growing. It quite took our breath away, after seeing the house itself, and we also learnt that there were thousands of bulbs all planted, over one hundred rose bushes, standards, etc., and more than twenty

lilac trees of varying shades including some of a very deep wine colour not often seen.

The house itself had solid oak floors on the ground floor, and its windows were larger than anything we had seen in the vast majority of houses; and, moreover, all the principal rooms faced south, so that there was maximum sunshine throughout the house when any was available. We were told (and later verified the truth of this ourselves) that when the sun was shining there was no need to have any heating in the rooms even on the coldest winter's day. This sounds incredible, I know, but it is true nevertheless. The warmth of the sun is so great, shining through the very large windows, that it is warm enough to do without any fires or heating of any kind even when there is snow on the ground outside. In summer the sun is much higher than in winter, so that the rooms do not get the direct rays pouring through them then, and there is the opposite effect of coolness when the weather is very hot outside. In other words, the house was ideally planned and built, and it was without fireplaces, being electrically heated, except for the kitchen boiler. This was exactly what Elsie had wanted, and to crown it all there was the old Sussex wall she had hoped for, right in front of the house, to guard it from the prying eyes of the outside world! Finally, the price was very reasonable indeed, in view of the prevailing conditions. The only snag, as far as we could see, was that the garden fences had been blown away by the blast from the land-mine, and temporary fencing of poor quality had been erected in its place, whilst the house itself had suffered in various minor ways from bomb-blast too, and had a war-damage schedule for repairs attached to it, principally concerned with room redecorations, cracked ceilings, windows (there was a lot of temporary glass in them), etc.

We lost no time in coming to terms about buying the house, and could hardly believe our good fortune that it was soon going to be ours. There had naturally been other people after it, but for one reason or other they had hesitated over

the final purchase, so that we were given the opportunity to buy it out of hand if we put down a deposit of £150, which we did right away by cheque. Final arrangements were soon completed and we took possession on 10th November, 1944, six months before the war ended. Needless to say the value of property has since that time increased considerably, so that all in all I feel we have very much to be grateful for about the whole transaction. Since then it has been our desire to make the home we thus acquired as available as far as possible to friends associated with us in our Theosophical and Nature Cure work, to make it as much a haven of rest, peace and beauty to them as it is to us. We feel that having been blessed by Providence with such a boon ourselves, it is only right to extend the blessing of it as far and wide as we can.

Once the purchase of the house was completed, with the aid of the bank overdraft promised me (the full amount of which I did not need to take up as my publishers came to my rescue with a goodly sum as advance royalties on my books), the next thing was to see about furniture, as what we had in the flat was nothing like sufficient for our new needs. Here again fate stepped in on our behalf. Elsie had recently begun to take up knitting as an evening pastime, when she got tired of reading, and she was introduced by a friend to someone in Worthing who was an expert in these matters. It was through this very kindly and helpful person that we were put in touch with a lady who had some furniture to sell, *which we could acquire at pre-war prices!* When one thinks of the cost of furniture during the war years, even poor second-hand stuff, it will be appreciated what this meant to us. It was a stroke of the purest good fortune, of which we took immediate advantage. The owner of the furniture had just lost her husband, and had had two houses, the furniture of one of which she was selling, and she did not want it to get into the hands of trade buyers; only into the hands of people who really needed it and would appreciate its real quality and value. Evidently we were of that category, for we soon became very good

friends with the lady and bought everything we needed from her to complete the furnishing of our new home, at very reasonable cost indeed. We have never ceased to feel grateful to her for this kindness, for she could have got twice the price we paid her for the things we bought. But she was quite satisfied with the transaction, and needless to say, so were we!

Fate having worked so handsomely on our behalf in the purchase and furnishing of our new home, we felt all the more the need of putting all we knew into our chosen lines of work for the help and happiness of our fellow men and women. For we felt we *must give* of our best, having *received* so much ourselves. Through the succeeding years I believe that our joint efforts have not been entirely in vain. It is not for myself to say what we have achieved, but I have reason to think that more than one individual has learnt to be thankful for the advice, encouragement and assistance given to them in time of mental and spiritual, as well as physical, distress or need. Thus we feel we are repaying in some small degree the good fortune showered upon us in securing our present house and home.

The end of the war found me in considerably different circumstances from those in which I had been at the beginning. The change was startling in the extreme. I had acquired a wife, whose good qualities and abilities I have learnt to appreciate more and more as the years pass; I had been fortunate in having the sales of my books greatly multiplied by the publicity given to one of them by the B.B.C.; I had become the possessor of a home that exceeded anything I had ever imagined possible (and for which my wife and myself never cease to give grateful thanks to Providence); and I had come in touch with the *real* Theosophy of Madame Blavatsky, which I had been in danger of overlooking entirely through my unfortunate experience with the Adyar Society in 1926-27, and this *real* Theosophy meant as much to me in its way (if not more) than the Nature Cure philosophy itself. Surely I could count myself a very fortunate person when one thinks

of what the war did for others? But it was obviously my *Karma* that fortune should smile on me when she did, and I always keep in mind the thought that things may just as suddenly go all the other way should my *Karma* demand this of me later on. I have no illusions on the matter, and hope I shall be ready to face whatever ill-fortune fate may have in store with due courage and fortitude and the faith in life and the future that the Theosophical teachings have instilled into me.

## CHAPTER VIII

### BUSY DAYS AT "OFFINGTON COTTAGE"

SOON after we moved into our new house (known as "Offington Cottage") we had a visit from John Wood (of *Health for All*) and Philip G. Keeler, with regard to the establishment of a branch of the British Health Freedom Society in Worthing, of which I eventually became chairman. We did our best to stimulate interest in the objects of the society and had a number of well-attended meetings. I do not regard myself as a good public speaker, and so make it a rule to refuse invitations to speak at public meetings of any kind, where at all possible; but my wife is an excellent speaker on Theosophical subjects. I much prefer writing to lecturing at any time! It is far easier for me in every way.

By the time the war ended we were well established in our new home, and there was always plenty of work to do in the garden of "Offington Cottage." Among her many qualifications my wife is an excellent gardener, having the proverbial "green fingers," and I left all the real work of the garden to her, as I am no good at such things at all. I did the mowing of our very large lawn and trimmed the hedges, and otherwise contented myself with praising my wife's efforts!

We determined to use nothing but organic fertilisers, and made our own compost in accordance with the principles of the late Sir Albert Howard, whose books we had read. The results were excellent in every way, and friends were agreeably surprised at what we grew in our garden and the quality of the produce. My wife makes the fullest possible use of the fruit we grow, and any apples in excess of what we can store are always either bottled or dried. Over one hundred two-pound jars of currants, gooseberries, strawberries, etc., have

been bottled some years, for use when fresh fruit is scarce. We grow as much of our own salad stuff as possible, but when short in winter we can always get supplies in Worthing, even in the coldest weather, as it has a reputation throughout the country for its market gardens.

We have a salad every day throughout the year, and our daily meals consist of a fruit breakfast, a light fruit or salad lunch (taken in the garden on every possible occasion, even in November and December), and a large salad evening meal with 100 per cent wholewheat bread which my wife bakes, and butter or margarine, and either egg or cheese, with a sweet to follow of stewed or bottled fruit, or such-like light dessert. We also make our own sour milk (or Koumiss) to have with fruit, etc. Altogether we no doubt live very frugally as judged by orthodox standards, but very healthily as judged by results. Just as a change we have one cooked meal a week, of pressure-cooked garden vegetables and potatoes baked in their jackets, with grated cheese and, say, a dessert of baked apple. No heavy puddings ever, or stodgy vegetarian dishes. In winter we have some form of vegetable soup before our evening meal. In the afternoon we have China tea, with a wholemeal biscuit or two, or a piece of wholemeal cake if desired.

When friends come to visit us they always enjoy our Food Reform meals, even those we least expect to do so, and by such unobtrusive efforts many are made vitally interested in the whole subject of Diet Reform. We never force our views on these matters on anyone, but if people are interested and like to ask questions, we are only too willing to answer them. Surely that is the only sensible method for the propagation of Food Reform ideas?

Wild bird-life in our garden is extensive. It is no uncommon thing to see woodpeckers walking about the lawn in their brilliant red, gold and green plumage, as well as rooks, jackdaws, wood-pigeons and wild doves, in addition to the



everyday robin, blackbird, thrush, missle-thrush, chaffinch, wren, various kinds of tits, etc. The cuckoo is a regular visitor every spring (I wonder how many people know the call of the female cuckoo?), and we sometimes get the nightingale too, for brief spells. We have a robin that is a daily guest at our breakfast table, my wife having trained him to come indoors and eat out of a special little red plate she bought for him. At first she placed this on the window-sill, then on the floor inside the room, and finally on the table itself, where we are eating, and he now thinks nothing of sharing a meal with us. During the strawberry and currant season the blackbirds and thrushes keep us busy trying to disentangle them from our nets, and I am afraid there is more than one casualty in the bird world at that time as a result of a too eager desire for forbidden fruit!

During the very cold winter in 1946-47 we saw the footmarks of a fox in the garden. It had been driven down from the neighbouring Downs by the intense weather. Wild rabbits are sometimes a menace too, as we are right on the edge of the open country. We love the peace and rusticity of it all, and the bustle of town life passes us by with hardly a murmur. Within one hundred yards of our house there is a narrow country lane overhung by tall trees which leads up to the golf course and Downs, and a large equestrian stable is situated there for those who wish to go riding. From this handy source my wife gets a goodly pile of invaluable horse-manure for our compost heap, which she gathers as many evenings a week as possible, in her old gardening clothes and with a special handcart she has devised for the purpose. At first she felt a bit shy about doing this, but now she does not mind in the least if people see her at her task, and indeed many stop to comment and ask about the garden and praise her efforts to enrich its growth and verdure!

Being very close to the Downs, as mentioned, we often take walks there, and in winter our favourite walk as dusk is

gathering is along what is called locally the "Long Furlong." This is a narrow winding road which runs through the Downs from the village of Findon to the village of Clapham (a distance of about four miles), and is always a real aesthetic pleasure to walk along apart from the actual exercise and its physical benefit. The rolling Downs always look charming at any time of the year and in all weathers, and we love this particular walk most when it is blustery and rainy. As we reach the top of the rise of the "Long Furlong" on such occasions, we are met by tremendous gusts of wind and rain, but we enjoy the whole outing thoroughly despite the wetting we get. It seems to blow the cobwebs away from the brain, and refreshes us not only mentally and physically but spiritually as well.

It is no uncommon sight to see the Foxhunt meet at Findon or on the "Long Furlong," but despite its picturesqueness this is something we definitely do not like to meet. Bloodsports seem entirely out of place in such a sylvan setting. Near us we have the delightful old-world town of Steyning, and in another direction lovely Amberley with its thatched roofs and roses, and all in all I feel we live in an especially pleasant area for those who love the country, as my wife and myself do. In spring the nearby Clapham Woods are a wonderful feast of colour with wild flowers of all kinds, and the bluebells there are a sight to behold in early May. I am very well known by sight to the woodmen who work in the woods, as I visit them so often all the year round. These men cut down the hazel undergrowth to make hurdles and fencing, which is a local village industry. Not far away from us also is the old village of Sompting, with its market gardens, famous for their tomatoes, and its ancient church which is pre-Norman.

The most famous landmarks near us are the old mill at High Salvington (now a tea-garden for tourists), and Cissbury and Chanctonbury Ring. These are ancient British encampments on the Downs, and the old earthworks are still discern-

ible under the turf which has grown over them during thousands of years. Chanctonbury is a landmark for many miles around because of its clump of 1,000 beech trees which were planted on its summit by a past owner of Wiston Park just below it. He made a vow to do this when he came into the property, as a mark of affection for the happy hours spent up there as a youth, and the beeches are now nearly 200 years old and in good condition. There is a legend that on Cissbury Ring the ancient Britons held out against the Romans indefinitely, never being defeated there over a period of centuries. There are many archaeological remains to be unearthed still on Cissbury, showing that it was not only an ancient British fortress, but also a large village or even small town, perched up there on the Downs. The discerning resident or visitor turns a blind eye on the actual coastal area between Brighton and Worthing and beyond, because, despite its many amenities for those who like a seaside holiday, aesthetically it is nothing but an eyesore and bids fair to become more so as each year passes. But we cannot have everything just as we should like it, and I do feel that on balance we have a very great deal to be thankful for in the part of Sussex that we inhabit. Incidentally Worthing has a claim to be regarded as the sunniest spot on the south coast, and has headed the sunshine record for this country on many occasions.

From the Diet Reformer's point of view, Worthing is especially favoured. We have no less than four Health Food Stores, which is a record many much larger towns cannot compare with. There is no doubt that Diet Reform ideas are steadily growing in this area; but there is need for more initiative in opening Food Reform guest houses, and we could do with a really large and well-equipped Nature Cure home in the vicinity too. I often get people who have read my books writing or phoning me for advice about Food Reform guest houses in this area of Sussex, but I do not welcome such enquiries, I must confess. It is not for me to say which places are better than others, as I may be held responsible if things

do not turn out as well as the enquirer wishes. In such matters individuals desiring to visit the district must make their own choice.

Speaking for my wife and myself, I may say we try to avoid making our views about diet and Nature Cure conspicuous in any way to the local inhabitants. We do not wish to be regarded as cranks, or as people with a rigidly narrow outlook on life, as some vegetarians and Nature Curists become. We try to meet the residents on their own ground as far as possible, and evince an interest in the things that interest them, rather than attempt to steer the conversation round to the things that interest us most. Of course if anyone should show the slightest desire at all to know anything about Diet Reform or Nature Cure we should be only too glad to go into details. But none of them seem to know (or care) anything about these subjects, unfortunately. However many people there may be in Worthing who are interested in Diet Reform or Nature Cure, they certainly do not live in Upper Brighton Road!

Perhaps this is just as well in its way, for it enables me to carry on with my own affairs with no interference from curiosity-mongers, and without anyone in the immediate vicinity having the slightest idea of my vocation. What with my own work and my wife's Theosophical activities I should imagine that our post-bag is one of the largest in the neighbourhood, and more than one postman has commented on the variety of stamps we get from all over the world. My wife saves these and sells them periodically to a local stamp-dealer, and what she gets is a useful addition to the funds for her course.

As already mentioned in a previous chapter, when I began to say something about my Theosophical interests in *Health for All*, many readers took umbrage at this, and felt I was taking an unfair advantage of them. As they saw it, *Health for All* was a Nature Cure periodical and no one had a right to bring in subjects that were not directly related to the

Nature Cure philosophy. But as I see it, Theosophy is related to the Nature Cure philosophy, in the sense that it too is directly concerned with natural law and man's obedience to, and co-operation with, such law on all planes of his being. However, I have never tried more than to refer to the subject in passing, and I am sure that Mr. Lief and Mr. Wood would not allow anything completely outside the scope of interest of their readers to be included in the magazine.

Apropos of this same subject, it is surprising the number of letters I have received from people with the most diverse views and beliefs all condemning my interest in Theosophy and my desire to say something occasionally in *Health for All* about its key tenets such as Reincarnation, Karma, Creative Evolution, etc. It seems that all my critics are solid in their approval of my efforts to make Nature Cure as widely known as possible, but each from his or her different angle strongly objects to my saying anything beyond that. Some are opposed to my Theosophical ideas because they are rationalists; some because they are orthodox Christians or Jews; some because they are Fundamentalists, or British Israelites, or Plymouth Brethren, or what-not. The surprising thing is that all these people, with such widely divergent views about life and its meaning and purpose, should have a common ground for belief in the Nature Cure philosophy. It speaks volumes for that philosophy that it is acceptable to such widely differing outlooks. One man who writes to me from New Zealand is an ardent admirer of my books on Nature Cure and insists on sending me tracts and leaflets designed to make me change my views and enter the fold again of the orthodox religious. He is determined to "save my soul" at all costs, because he asserts I have done so much for suffering humanity, and it is a pity to see me going down to eternal damnation!

Another of the admirers of my Nature Cure work wrote to me one day to say she was positively shocked to read somewhere of my interest in Theosophy. She said that it nullified

all my previous good work for the improvement of the health of suffering mankind, and she for one would never dream of again using the methods outlined in my books if she were ill at any time in the future. The fact that there are thousands of other people who are not Theosophists who also write or give advice about Nature Cure did not seem to weigh for one instant in my favour. It seemed that my interest in Theosophy immediately obliterated anything good there might be in Nature Cure in so far as I had had any hand in its propagation before the public. Verily it is indeed difficult to please all people, especially over controversial religious issues, and I for one have no desire to do so, I can assure the reader. My views are my own views, and if people do not care for them they have every right to reject them. But why such rejection should also include the invaluable and proven therapeutic value of Nature Cure as well is quite beyond me.

It is all too clear to me that when one gets on to the subject of religion or religious beliefs (however widely these terms may be construed) he is running up against vastly more bigotry and narrow-mindedness than when opposing orthodox medicine. The opposition here is strong enough, goodness knows, but somehow it is far less fierce or vindictive, however much it may savour of such feelings at times, than when people's religious beliefs or passions are affected or aroused. This only serves to show how completely irrational and ill-founded such beliefs are, for otherwise those affected would be ready to discuss the subject without all this acrimony and abuse.

It has never been either my wife's or my own policy to seek to turn anybody against their religion, whatever it may be. If it suits them, all well and good. Nothing could be better. It is those who are *dissatisfied* with religion (or at least that brand of it they have been brought up to believe in) to whom we try to give a helping hand through a knowledge of the Theosophical teachings. Far from taking people away from religion, as some assert, a knowledge of these teachings will

make it possible for anyone to see the underlying truth *in all religions*. But that is exactly what some people do not want. They do not want to feel that all religions have truth in them. They prefer to believe that only one special brand of religion has truth in it (their own special brand, of course) and that all other religions are quite ridiculous and mere credulous superstition.

It is that type of bigotry which is at the bottom of most of the criticism to which real Theosophy is exposed (and which I myself have encountered), and it is that kind of bigotry that Madame Blavatsky and those who follow in her footsteps were and are out to fight, because it is the greatest curse mankind is subjected to, mentally and spiritually. It blights all clear thinking and impedes all real spiritual development, and has its repercussions on the physical body too. I feel that my books on Theosophy are doing their little bit to dispel the colossal ignorance in which the whole subject of religion and the true religious life is shrouded in the public mind, but there is a vast amount to be done yet before the surface of the matter has been more than scratched.

As I see it (and I have given the subject a great deal of thought through the years) there are three stages of development of the religious instinct or feeling. In the first stage one accepts without criticism the religion one has been brought up in, with its rituals, dogmas, etc., and many people stay in that category quite contentedly throughout their lives. But in stage two there is a rebellion against the religion of one's childhood and adolescence, and the former believer turns against religion altogether and becomes either an atheist or agnostic. He has no use for religion at all and feels that the whole thing is sheer nonsense, and mere superstition and idolatry, and just fit for infantile minds and emotions. But in the third stage, the erstwhile atheist or agnostic begins to feel *that there is such a thing as real religion* after all, whilst at the same time realising that it has no need to be associated with

any formal religion or set creed of any kind. He begins to realise the real religious feeling or instinct within himself, and perceives that it is because of this feeling within him that he has turned against the orthodox religion he was brought up in and which satisfied his parents. It was because that religion did not really satisfy his own inner longings for religious sustenance that he turned against religion altogether, and he now feels the need to turn *back* to religion again, although to no one particular brand of it.

It is precisely to this third group of minds that Theosophy appeals, for it shows that the religious instinct is innate in man, and that its expression in life is essential for real growth of human nature—at least the higher levels of it. When people begin to realise that they can be truly religious without having to subscribe to any formal creed or set of ritualistic beliefs, they have taken a great step forward in their mental and spiritual development, a step which many of the foremost minds of our day have yet to take. It is because this third category of people is steadily growing throughout the years that there is an ever-widening circle of individuals ready to become interested in the truths of Theosophy, as I see it, and that is why I look forward to many years of useful propaganda work in that connection in conjunction with my wife, as well as to a steady increase in the range and scope of my Nature Cure work too.

Thus I view the future with complete faith in both connections, and meanwhile feel that it is only in the way one conducts *one's own life* that one can show one's faith in one's beliefs. Through Nature Cure one should reflect it in the way one looks and feels physically, and in the impression one makes on those with whom one comes in daily contact, as regards healthful appearance, vitality, alertness of mind, vivacity, etc.; through Theosophy, in the mental and spiritual outlook one brings to bear on the day-to-day problems of existence.



I feel that there must be something at work here, in both my own and my wife's case, because we always seem to get on remarkably well with all the local tradespeople, workmen who come to do any household repairs for us, etc. This may seem the merest triviality to some, but to me it says a great deal. If your window-cleaner, or shoe-repairer, or grocer, or milkman, for instance, *really likes* to serve or work for you, and always greets you with smiles and a pleasant word (and is met equally in return that way), then there must be *something* he senses which shows him you are trying to live on worth-while lines; something that has nothing to do with theories, however grandiloquent, or with purely speculative ideas or views. He senses that you are *genuine* in your approach to life and to him, and he responds immediately. I submit that this is the only real way in which to bring one's life into actual conformity with true religious principles, principles that have nought to do with ritual observances or attendances at church or synagogue or chapel, but everything to do with how one conducts oneself in relation to one's fellow-men.

A few months after we came to live at "Offington Cottage" there was the General Election, and my wife and myself were faced with a quandary here. We both have no sympathy with the Conservative outlook, but neither had we with the Socialist outlook either. We felt it was far too doctrinaire and theoretical, and its love for its fellow-men and women largely lodged in its brain rather than in the heart. We therefore refrained from voting altogether, and I feel that many millions did likewise for the same reasons. If only that large body of opinion could be mobilised on behalf of a party pledged to monetary reform, what a difference it might make to the future of this country! (What a chance for a *really regenerated* Liberal Party!)

I have already briefly referred to my reasons for opposing Socialism as a theory and political creed, and it was interest-

ing to me to discover that Madame Blavatsky (the founder of the Theosophical Movement) also felt exactly the same about Socialism and Communism. To her the regeneration of man was not to be found in economics, but in a new spiritual outlook, and that is the Theosophical view to-day, although this does not mean that we would willingly or complacently countenance social and economic abuses of all kinds. But such abuses and evils can only be tackled superficially by economics and politics. For a *real solution* it is only a new spiritual outlook that can achieve the ends desired, because with such a new spiritual outlook economic and environmental factors would tend to change automatically. Not overnight of course, but it is a definite esoteric law that if we wish to change our material circumstances we must change ourselves first, and this I have proved up to the hilt in my own case. Let Socialist planners try to change the external circumstances of the people of this country as much as they like, the real core of the problem will still remain unsolved, because it resides within the hearts and minds of the people on whose assumed behalf the planners are working. They will take those minds and hearts into whatever new circumstances the planners (out of the goodness of their intentions) have made possible for them, so that new problems (which will be the old problems all over again but in a new form) will spring up to upset and frustrate all the hopes and rosy dreams of the Socialist idealists who have brought about the new change in outward conditions for the masses through their legislative efforts.

This is a very profound subject, and one not easy to appreciate to the full at first glance; and many draw the conclusion from such remarks that one is completely callous towards the poor and downtrodden and without any sympathy for them. Nothing could be further from the truth; but it is a truth difficult to comprehend because it cuts straight across present-day accepted ideas and notions.

In this connection I would like to say a few words here

about Communism. Up to 1945 I had paid very little attention to Russia except to applaud her efforts during the war. But when I saw how things began to develop after May 1945 I thought it was about time I read some books on the subject of Russia and Communism just to learn what was really going on in that vast country and in the minds of its leaders. What I learnt shocked and repelled me intensely. If one reads such books as Arthur Koestler's *Darkness at Noon*, Victor Kravchenko's *I Chose Freedom*, *Report on The Russians*, by William Allen White, and the many volumes extant on the political, social, and economic conditions in Russia and its satellite countries to-day, one is appalled that people in other parts of the world can swallow Communist propaganda so glibly.

Apart from those who quite literally accept the Marxist doctrine of the class war and the "liquidation" of all sections of the community except the proletariat (which, incidentally, means nothing but crude revolution and bloodshed on a global scale), as I see it, people wish to feel that there is at least one country in the world where the conditions lacking in their own country are in full operation for the benefit of those living there; also there is the idealistic belief current in many minds that *real Communism* (as advocated by Christ) is operative in Communist-dominated lands. Nothing could be further from the truth in either case, but once people have given mental allegiance to the Communist ideology for either (or both) these reasons, they are committed willy-nilly to support of Russia and Russian political manœuvring, whether they like it or not. Thus they tend to turn a blind eye on what is actually happening in Russia and the countries under her sway, however repugnant to them ethically (that is, if they *do* know what is actually happening there!), and console themselves with the thought that it is only the enmity and prejudices of the Western Powers that prevent Russia from securing her rightful place in world affairs.

I am no prophet of the future, but as I write this in the

summer of 1949 it is my firm belief that when Stalin dies the whole elaborate Communist edifice erected on his shoulders will collapse and Russia will be reduced to internal chaos and revolution in the struggle for power among the Soviet leaders. The average Communist (outside Russia) naïvely believes that Communism is firmly established in Russia for ideological reasons (i.e., because of the inherent rightness of its theories as applied to the economic life of the country); but this is most decidedly not the case. Communism only exists in Russia because of the power and sway of Stalin over the entire Russian people. If it were really true that it is Communism as such which is in control there, and not the edicts and secret police of Stalin and the Politburo, then my prediction will be proved false. But I am sure it will not be so disproved, and I await with confidence the verdict of time.

Whatever faults Socialism may have, in my view, they are certainly incomparably less in every way than those of Communism, and the attempts of our Socialist Government to build a new Britain under the ægis of Socialist planning and direction can be viewed with tolerant amusement (and a certain amount of genuine approval here and there), where they do not impinge too heavily on individual freedom and initiative. If I were condemned to live in a world completely dominated by either Socialism or Communism I would choose the former every time. On the other hand, if I were condemned to live in a world completely dominated by either Capitalism or Socialism I would choose the former every time, despite its many and glaring anomalies and abuses. If man is to achieve real mental and spiritual maturity it will never be within the benumbing folds of ideologies such as either Socialism or Communism, but under a reformed Capitalism in which the gross errors and blunders of the past have been curbed by enlightened legislation, and within the orbit of a sound currency system based on a real understanding between money, credit and debt. (In this connection I advise every one of my readers to study *Human Ecology*, by Dr. Thomas Robertson,

published by Maclellan of Glasgow. They will find much food for useful thought there.)

When the war ended Theosophical contacts with countries on the Continent were renewed, and my wife visited Holland and Sweden on behalf of our society, where we have national sections considerably stronger than in this country. Theosophical work in Germany was also renewed with considerable impetus. At the end of 1946 my wife went to America at the request of the head of the society, Col. A. L. Conger, and spent nearly six weeks there visiting various lodges and giving lectures, etc. She went out and back by the *Queen Elizabeth*, but although a first-class sailor she is emphatic that she much prefers a smaller boat for comfort and ease of travelling. Of course she is entirely in favour of air travel these days, and travels by air whenever possible when going abroad, and she went that way when visiting America again for four weeks in the spring of 1949. I myself detest long-distance travel of any kind, and much prefer to be on *terra firma*.

For this last visit to the United States my wife had to be vaccinated to conform with U.S. immigration rules, and as we both loathe the idea of inoculations of any kind, in accordance with our Nature Cure principles, we were in rather a quandary. In cases like this *straight* Nature Cure can only offer the suggestion of a fast before and after the vaccination, in order to mitigate its toxic effect, but as my wife has an heredity of tuberculosis in her family I felt we ought to take stronger measures than that.

We could have tried homeopathy, but as my wife has been brought up on that from birth, and it has never seemed to have much effect on her, we decided to try herbalism in this instance, because a friend of my wife's (Christmas Humphreys, the eminent lawyer and head of the Buddhist Society in this country) had mentioned in his book *Via Tokyo* the wonderful prophylactic effect of certain herbal preparations provided for him by Mrs. Leyel (the head of Culpeper House, in

London), when he had to be inoculated when going to Japan to act on the War Crimes Commission there. I accordingly advised my wife to see Mrs. Leyer about her case, and the results were most satisfactory. The herbal medicine provided brought out a huge ulcer on the same leg where the vaccination had taken place, and through this vicarious outlet the poisons injected into her system were dissipated. The ulcer took several weeks to heal, but think of what would have remained in my wife's system if it had not occurred! I give credit here to what herbalism can do in such cases, all the more so because I do not regard it as anything like a fundamental approach to the eradication of disease. It can help many disease-sufferers, and can improve the health of ill folk in many ways, but as a fundamental philosophy of disease-treatment it cannot compare in any way with Nature Cure in my view. It merely treats effects and secondary causes, never fundamental causes and issues.

During the years 1946-48 I devoted quite a good deal of my time to a study of the basic principles of homeopathy, as the subject intrigued me quite a lot in view of the seemingly miraculous results secured by homeopaths in certain cases of disease. The more one delves into homeopathy the more one finds to think about, and there can be no doubt at all that Dr. Samuel Hahnemann, the founder of homeopathy, was a genius of the highest rank in the world of healing. A study of his books provides much food for thought to Nature Cure practitioners, because so many of his findings are in line with the Nature Cure philosophy; and it took me quite some time to come to a proper understanding with myself about the whole subject. What I mean by this is, on the one hand I saw what homeopathy could achieve in certain cases, and perceived the great value to be derived from a study of the teachings of its founder; but on the other hand I equally saw how easy it is to use homeopathy for the treatment of disease without doing anything to make the patient aware of the need for any alteration in his mode of living to ward off or prevent

future disease from affecting him.

It seemed all wrong, for instance, to treat a sufferer from chronic catarrh or constipation (to cite but two simple examples) by homeopathy, and then allow him to carry on with the same faulty habits of living that had caused the said conditions to arise in the first place. The sufferer now cured of his catarrh or constipation by homeopathy goes on eating the wrong food just as before, not taking sufficient fresh air and exercise, and breaking other natural health laws, so that his catarrh or constipation is bound to return in due course (or else his body will be adversely affected in another way) because basic causes have not been removed by the treatment, *only secondary causes and effects*. Thus, in my view, homeopathy is just as likely to prevent a true understanding of the basic causes of disease in the human body in the mind of the sufferer as orthodox medicine, and is equally non-fundamental in that sense, although the effects of homeopathic treatment would not be likely to affect the body adversely as medical drug treatment does.

As I saw it, the full value of homeopathy could only be attained through its utilization in conjunction with Nature Cure methods, and it is only under such conditions that I would advocate its use at all. For then the patient knows his ill-health is due to the breaking of the natural laws upon which the vitality and full health of his body depend, and will take steps in future to see that those laws are observed when he is well again. Otherwise he will only rush to homeopathy every time he is ill, as the orthodox individual does to medical science; and when the symptoms of his disease have disappeared under the treatment he will go on exactly as before breaking natural health laws in all directions. Surely that is not the sort of thing we wish to see where the true health interests of the community are concerned?

It is precisely the same with biochemistry and herbalism. I am not opposed to the use of either of these therapies in

conjunction with Nature Cure methods, because they can do a great deal of good in many cases; but to rely on them solely, and ignore dietetic treatment and the adoption of a sane regimen of living upon which future health must be based to be permanent, seems to me the height of folly where the best interests of the patient are concerned. This is what most herbalists do, however, although not all, and I have distinctly seen it stated that where herbal treatment is carried out *there is no need at all for the patient to diet!* This means, in effect, eat whatever you like and break Nature's laws in any way you wish, and then come to me for herbal treatment and I will soon put you right again!

Surely such an attitude to disease and its treatment is *ethically* wrong in the fullest meaning of the term, because it *encourages* people to disobey sensible health laws in the belief that they can do so with impunity so long as they use herbal medicines. And much the same attitude of mind is fostered by many homeopaths. They are so confident of the efficacy of their therapy that they also convey the impression to their patients that it does not matter in the least what they eat or do, homeopathy can soon make them well if they are ill at any time. I submit that this is all wrong and only leads to the inculcation of entirely false ideas about disease in the mind of the public. And it plays right into the hands of the medical profession because their attitude to disease is identical, only in their case the patient is taught to rely on vaccines or M. and B. or penicillin, instead of on herbs or homeopathic pilules.

I gave this whole question a great deal of thought during the years mentioned (i.e., 1946-48), and also considered the effects of such therapies as Spiritual Healing, Christian Science, and others which depend for their efficacy on the treatment of the mind and spirit rather than the physical body of the sufferer. I came to certain conclusions about all these different non-medical approaches to the treatment of



disease and systematised my views in a book (written during 1948) which I called *Unorthodox Healing versus Medical Science*,\* in the hope that what I had to say there might be of value to many unorthodox healers, no matter of what school of thought, as well as to the lay public at large. What effect the book will ultimately have on the unorthodox healing world and those who turn to it for the relief or cure of their ills remains to be seen, but I hope that something constructive will emerge in due course. It is high time some disciplined thought was brought to bear on the subject, and this I have attempted in my small way.

In some respects this book may seem like a recantation of some of my earlier views about disease and its treatment; but it is only to be expected that as one grows in understanding, through the knowledge gained during many years of Nature Cure work, one's ideas should change somewhat. Surely that is the only sign of maturity and growth? Otherwise one would be condemned always to stand by what one said twenty, thirty or perhaps fifty years ago, for fear of having it thought one was being untrue to one's basic principles! But this is not so at all. One's basic principles do not have to change in the slightest merely because superficial changes have taken place in one's attitude to certain aspects of disease-treatment. There must always be room for growth and change in ideas *on the surface*, otherwise one would never be the possessor of a *really living* philosophy of disease at all. Where there is no movement there is stagnation and decay. That is a biological law of the greatest importance, and it is just as applicable to one's philosophical beliefs as regards their contact with the sentient world around us, as to the growth or development of the living inhabitants of that world. Where there is life (whether of human beings or ideas) there must necessarily be either growth or decay, and stagnation of ideas is synonymous with decay.

I therefore feel that in my book I have done my bit towards

\* To be published shortly.

making the Nature Cure philosophy as pliant and responsive to new ideas and therapies as is consistent with its basic approach to the cause and treatment of disease. If my efforts are judged to be a going back on former views, I can only say here that this is simply because those so judging me have failed to understand the spirit in which the book was written. They are in effect *an expansion* of former views, to fit the facts presented by various unorthodox therapies in the treatment of disease, and an attempt—however feeble—to bring some unity into the whole field of unorthodox healing. This is a very large question indeed, and one can only hope that one's effort will meet with some small modicum of reward in the sense of a greater unification of unorthodox therapies on a basis of true relationship with the working of natural law in the Universe and Man.

It seems to me to be only right that someone who, like myself, is vitally interested in healing in its widest sense, should be ready to investigate new forms of therapeutics as they come into existence, provided they do not conflict with basic Nature Cure principles; and that is why, in 1947, I studied with deep interest the work being done by Mr. L. E. Eeman in mental relaxation and the treatment of disease by his special therapeutic methods. I paid three visits to Mr. Eeman in London, with my wife, towards the end of that year, just to be shown in person how his methods operate, and we came away full of praise for the magnificent work he is doing. I also feel that we made a firm friend in Mr. Eeman himself, who is a living embodiment of the methods he advocates.

The work being done by Matthias Alexander in release of mental and bodily tensions is somewhat on the same lines in certain respects, but I feel that Eeman gets down more to fundamentals, having also had some personal experience of the Alexander technique way back in 1934, just for experimental reasons. Thanks to Sir Stafford and Lady Cripps, the

work of Alexander has derived considerable publicity in recent years, but if only the results of Eeman's researches could be given equal publicity I feel a great advance in real therapeutics would be accomplished, one that would have marked repercussions on the mental and physical health of this nation, and perhaps the world.

Thus the years under review in this chapter—i.e., from the end of 1944 to 1949—were busy ones indeed, as regards my work and studies in connection with natural healing, and I feel there is still a vast amount of new knowledge in this realm to be gained in the immediate future. Only those with closed minds could say at this juncture: "We know all there is to know about the cause and treatment of disease; there is no need for further knowledge!" Such an attitude on the part of one who is devoting his life to the cure of humanity's ills is deplorable. But so also is that of the practitioner who is always dropping one form of therapy for another in the vain belief that here at last he has a "cure-all" for disease. Both attitudes are equally bad, and show a lamentable lack of understanding of the basic requirements of the art of true healing, an art which *must* be based on full acceptance of, and co-operation with, *natural law* on all levels of man's being.

In Worthing, as in most towns, there is a variety of unorthodox practitioners of various schools of thought, and I am ready to give praise to all their efforts so long as they do not lead their patients to believe that they can break natural laws with impunity, as regards diet, attention to the proper care of the body, etc., and keep well. No one can keep well for long who does that sort of thing, no matter what brand of healing he may resort to for aid when ill. I myself have periodic osteopathic treatment here from a friend in Worthing, because I feel it is something well worth while for keeping up one's general level of fitness, and also because of the lymphatic weakness left after the removal of the T.B.

gland from my neck when I was seventeen, the effect of which I still feel to some extent despite my strict adherence to Nature Cure principles. My wife also has periodic osteopathic treatment for general toning-up purposes and because she had a rather unfortunate accident when on a train journey from London two years ago, and twisted her head when asleep and paralysed one of the cranial nerves, thus affecting the left side of her face. It has slowly got better ever since then, but is still not quite right. Otherwise we both keep in excellent health apart from an occasional slight cold which is thrown off in a day or two. I would be very surprised if it were otherwise, in view of our mode of living, and I can safely assert that, as regards my own well-being and that of my own immediate family, Nature Cure has proved its rightness up to the hilt. When I think of the state of health of most of the people one meets these days, I can only give thanks for having been brought in touch with Nature Cure when I was, quite apart from my actual work in connection with it. In the spring of 1948 my wife and I spent a fortnight at a well-known Nature Cure home, as I wanted to give her the benefit of the rest and treatment there, and we both enjoyed our visit immensely.

What I have said so far (rather haltingly, I fear) covers the span of my life to my present age of fifty-three. What the future has in store for me I do not know, of course, but I do feel there is much to be accomplished yet in relation to the work I am associated with in the Nature Cure world (apart from my Theosophical activities). It is work full of promise to suffering mankind and therefore has a blessing on it, and whatever may befall I hope I shall prove worthy of any future trust that may be bequeathed to me in connection with the propagation of Nature Cure ideas and principles among my thinking fellow men and women.

But I do not wish to break off here with my story. If my life has been worth anything at all to me it is only in relation to the various truths relative to man's existence upon this

earth which we inhabit that have been revealed to me through the years; and in the next and concluding chapter I hope to acquaint the reader with the more important of those truths. Thus I feel I will have made him a partner in the true wisdom that experience has garnered for me during my lifetime, as well as having had him as a companion through these pages in the recital of the major episodes in the *adventure in living* that life has been to me.

## CHAPTER IX

### WHAT LIFE HAS TAUGHT ME

I APPROACH this last chapter of my autobiography with some trepidation, I must confess. It is easy enough to write about one's life experiences, but it is far harder in every way to put down in writing exactly what those experiences have meant in terms of true wisdom. For it seems to me that unless one can turn the fruits of experience into wisdom, one has failed in the real art of living. (For living is the greatest of arts, surely?) We live in order that we may experience life in all its multifarious facets, and the fruits of those experiences should be distilled down to leave a residue of crystals of wisdom to carry forward in one's mind for the rest of one's days. Thus we go on steadily learning from life, through our experiences, and in that way the accumulated distillations of experience are turned into those gleams of inner enlightenment whose radiance is so essential to blaze the trail and light up the path of the soul's evolution; for evolution is as much an individual as a racial and global thing.

As I rise each morning at 6.45 a.m. and go through my daily practice of a cold shower, friction-rub and exercises, I try to think of what new rays of wisdom life has brought me from the experiences of the previous day, but sometimes it takes weeks or months to arrive at conclusions about past experiences in their relation to my mental and spiritual unfoldment. When I retire at night, which is always early and usually never later than 10 p.m. (as I feel I have had quite a full enough day by then), I always make a practice of commending myself to the higher powers whose instrument I am (however faulty and lacking in many respects) in the hope that such small grains of wisdom as I have accumulated through my experiences (whether of the day or week or month or

year preceding) will be utilised *through me* for the benefit of my fellows. For the first thing that life has taught me is that trying to live for oneself or by oneself is not only hopeless but quite useless too. One can only live a worth-while existence through trying to live for one's fellow men and women in one's chosen work in life. It is only so that what one does has real validity and significance in the Cosmic Plan, and brings the doer *real satisfaction in living*.

Life has also taught me that, however much one may love or work for others, in essence one is always *alone*, and must necessarily be so throughout the whole of eternity. For we are lone pilgrims on the path of evolution, however much it is vitally necessary for us to live with, and share our experiences with, others. Thus we have to learn to stand *by ourselves* at as early an age as possible, and the more readily we can do this as the years advance, the surer can we be that our inner development and growth are proceeding apace. It is a grim lesson to imbibe, this fact that ultimately and basically we must be for ever alone, for it makes us feel our own smallness in the face of the Cosmos; but paradoxically enough, the more we ponder over the matter, the more do we realise that through this fact of our aloneness we come closest to the heart of life and of reality. For as each man or woman throws off the superficial things of existence and approaches closer and closer to that central core of themselves where their true individuality lies (and where that aloneness resides) they discover (much to their surprise) that they have a common meeting-ground there with all their fellows, which is so by virtue of the fact that, as human beings, we all share in a common divinity. Not that we can detect that divinity which is at the core of ourselves so readily; far from it. Nor have I yet discovered mine! But we know that it is there, at the heart of us, because it is the divine spark that has made us—you and I—what we are; beings embodying the eternal wonder of creation with the ability to think, feel, aspire, suffer, and, above all, *be*

*alive!* The experiences of the great seers and religious leaders of the race confirm this fact of man's divine source and parentage, and one's own experiences tend to confirm it too, the more one advances in self-knowledge and inner wisdom, by virtue of the steadily growing feeling one gets of *one's unity with all that is, and with the heart of Creation itself.*

Thus life has taught me that, although in essence we are for ever alone and must be prepared to stand alone in all the real tests and trials of existence, yet we are also all united basically in a common bond of divinity which is the essence of ourselves, which essence is the true basis of the *brotherhood of man.* This does not mean that superficial brotherhood of the mind and emotions spoken of by Socialists, but a brotherhood of the spirit which indissolubly links every man and woman with every other, and with all that lives. Once possessed of this knowledge one does not fear being alone in one's direct contacts with Nature and with Life, for there is a "something" which buoys us up and encourages us, no matter how grim our adventures in the sphere of daily living may be; a "something" that is far beyond our finite selves, and of a universal scope and character, and from which derives that true optimism of the soul which is the characteristic hallmark of the really mature man or woman.

During my life I have also learnt to worship the body. Not in any idolatrous sense, but in the sense of an ever-increasing appreciation of, and wonder at, its astonishing powers and adaptability to the tasks of daily living. We all tend to take our bodies for granted. It is the most natural thing in the world to do so, for we have been brought up with them from birth and we just accept them as they are without more ado. But when we begin to ponder over the marvels of our interior workings (the endocrine glands, for instance, or the central and sympathetic nervous system, or the brain, or the heart, or the lungs, etc.), and consider how marvellously they operate to form a unified and coherent system which is *the body*, that body through which our minds and souls function,



it is surely staggering in the extreme? The more one thinks about it, the more amazing it all seems, and, as I grow older, far from my wonder and admiration decreasing, they grow steadily all the time. For the more I learn about the miracles concealed within that body I possess and inhabit, the more do I marvel that so wondrous a thing should have been devised for my especial benefit.

It is because the body is such a perennial miracle, and looks after itself so wonderfully, that so little attention is paid to it by the average individual when well; yet it is precisely because of its miraculous self-regulating powers and adaptabilities that it keeps him well, *and can also cure him of his diseases when unwell*, if given the chance to do so. Here, in effect, is the whole essence of the Nature Cure philosophy, and it amazes me that so many Nature Curists do not also see their bodies in quite this light. They accept the fact that the body is self-curative, but they do not seem to appreciate the full significance of this statement. For it implies that the body is a *thinking entity* with a mind of its own, which is outside the grasp or direct contact of the mind we possess by virtue of our ability to think for ourselves. The body, therefore, is a unified and coherent organisation which derives its own thinking ability from the great Universal Mind in its own right, and is quite independent of the mind we are equipped with by that same Universal Source of Creative Ideation as thinking beings inhabiting those bodies. This seems to me to make it quite impossible to regard the body as a mere automaton, as something that has once been wound up and set going by evolutionary forces or factors that were accidental in their action and operation at the time, as rationalists seem to think. And that there are quite a goodly number of rationalists among Nature Cure adherents I have good cause to know, from my own postbag and the correspondence in *Health for All*. How such people can imagine that the body is self-curative and self-reparative, as the Nature Cure philosophy posits (and proves), and yet assume

that there is no constantly functioning *Intelligence* at work in its development and operations, is quite beyond me. It seems a complete contradiction in terms.

I can understand a man like Bertrand Russell holding such a view, for, despite his vast mental ability, he is quite devoid of any real spiritual insight, which renders his work quite sterile from the truly creative point of view. It is natural for a man like him to think the Universe has no meaning or purpose, although how he can explain why he has a mind of his own (and such a brilliant one at that!) in a Universe bereft of all reason I do not profess to understand. To men like Russell the body "just happened," and its wondrous powers and adaptabilities are brushed aside as mere accidents of an evolution which is itself accidental. To such lengths of "reasoning" are the so-called great minds of our age forced in their efforts to deny any spiritual foundation to the Universe we inhabit.

It is so obvious to me, as I view the body in its amazing versatility and ability, that it is an *Intelligence* of the highest order, and an alive and thinking entity *in its own right*, that I am constrained to assume that people who deny any spiritual values to the Universe and to themselves have lost all sense of proportion in their dealings with their own bodies as compared with the wonders daily brought forth by our mechanistic era. Such people are full of praise at the marvels of modern man's inventive genius, yet have none whatsoever for the bodies they inhabit, nor yet for the even more wondrous minds they are enabled to use in their refutation of the spiritual basis of existence and of themselves. Verily we live in a remarkable age—an age wherein people refuse to see the truly wonderful in life, and ascribe it to the efforts of man's own intelligence (puny by comparison with that which created it and him), because of a lack of true spiritual vision.

Other people see the mark of the unseen spiritual forces which shape and develop the Universe when gazing at beauti-

ful scenery, the magic of tree and flower, animal and bird life, etc.; so do I, but I gain my greatest insight into these "mystic" realms through the physical body, no doubt because it is the thing I am brought most in contact with in my daily work. But doctors are also brought into daily contact with the body in all its wonderful and awe-inspiring protean ability and adaptability; but do we discern this same worship of man's physical organism in them? In some, no doubt, but a very small percentage, alas. Otherwise they could never countenance that wholesale drugging, serumising and mutilating of that physical body as part of their work as "healers of the sick."

It is the crowning achievement of the Nature Cure practitioner, in my view, that he makes a true reverence for the body (and all that it stands for) the basis of his healing work. He accepts its own intelligence and knowledge of itself as the starting point for his efforts to heal his patient of disease, and endeavours to co-operate with that intelligence and instinctive knowledge in all that he attempts on his patient's behalf. What a contrast to medical science, which attempts to bludgeon the body into health when diseased, through its misguided belief that the body is incapable of helping itself when unwell despite the obvious fact that it is always doing so throughout life through what is known as the *Vita Medicatrix Naturae* (as in the healing of cuts, wounds, etc.), whenever given the opportunity to do so. (And all this quite apart from its amazing skill in keeping itself well as long as it does in the face of crippling conditions imposed on it through the forces set in operation by modern civilised existence !)

The next thing life has taught me is that only through suffering can we gain any real experience worthy of the name. Just as the tiny baby learns by trial and error, so do we continue to do so throughout life, and the trials and errors inevitably bring suffering in their train to impress in indelible ink the results of our mistakes upon our conscious-

ness. As we grow up the type of suffering varies considerably. At first it is mainly physical, but later it becomes increasingly more mental and emotional, and as the soul progresses it becomes more and more spiritual suffering. Life is impossible without suffering, it seems to me, but that does not imply that it is always and only a "vale of tears," as some assert. The more we learn by our sufferings, the less do we suffer thereafter as a consequence; and the more of real joy and happiness do we derive from life through the acceptance of the facts of existence our sufferings have driven home to us.

It is in this way—i.e., through suffering—that we learn that most invaluable of lessons: that it is only through *obedience to natural law* that man can live in harmony with the Cosmos. That is the most fundamental of all lessons in living we, as human beings, have to learn; and the fact that the Nature Cure philosophy is founded on this basic truth makes me certain it is absolutely right and sound. It is precisely the same with the Theosophical teachings. They, too, are founded on the same truth.

Life has taught me to apply this vital truth to all levels of my being, not only the physical but mental and spiritual levels too; and that is why I regard it as important for all Nature Curists to realise what this implies in their own self-development. It is not sufficient to eat correctly and obey Nature's laws about the physical organism; one must think correctly and aspire correctly too, and thus try to live correctly on *all planes* in a unified co-operation with natural law as applicable to man as a trinity compounded of physical, mental and spiritual factors.

Thus it is that, when diseased, man can be so from one, two or all three of these aspects of himself, and why it is so important to enlarge the scope of the Nature Cure approach to include the mental and spiritual as well. From this I do not wish it to be inferred that I believe that disease in the physical body can be entirely divorced from physical causes, as many present-day mental and spiritual healers assert. I

do not think the physical body can be affected by disease without physical factors being concerned in the matter to some extent in every case, no matter what other factors of a non-physical character may be involved too. I have tried to bring out this point clearly in my book *Unorthodox Healing versus Medical Science*. What life has taught me here, therefore, is that *real health* is one of our greatest possessions, and worth all the effort entailed in its attainment and retention; and that it is not sufficient for this purpose merely to try to live on a reformed diet and obey Nature's laws as regards the upkeep and care of the physical body. One must attune one's mind and spirit to the rule of natural law too, and obey it just as strictly in these realms (once having learnt how they operate in those regions, of course) for *full health* to be attainable.

Another important thing life has taught me is that although living for oneself is impossible if one wishes to live fully and satisfactorily, it is the hardest thing in the world to cut out selfishness. One may succeed in doing so fairly easily in its grosser manifestations, but it is surprising how difficult it is to be completely unselfish in the more important aspects of daily living. At least that is how I have found it. We can try to delude ourselves into thinking that we are doing this or that for completely unselfish motives, but underneath we know full well that basically we are doing it because of the satisfaction it gives us. We tend to cover up our selfishness by asserting it is for the good of others; but to perform a really unselfish act, from which we derive no personal satisfaction at all, seems to me quite outside common experience, and is reserved for such exceptional occurrences as one man sacrificing his life for another, and similar acts of true heroism, etc. In such cases the self is completely transcended; but how few are such episodes in the day-to-day life of society? (The mother's instinct to sacrifice herself for her children is not in the same category. She derives her greatest satisfaction from so doing!)

Thus I have come to the conclusion that so long as what

we do gives pleasure and benefit to others, it is about as unselfish as we can hope to be in the everyday affairs of life, even if what we do is also providing pleasure or benefit to ourselves too. In short, I have come to doubt whether—apart from the illustration quoted—there is anything really unselfish we can do at all, wherein we rule out entirely our own feelings and desires. All we can strive to do is to make those feelings and desires as altruistic as possible, so that our actions confer benefit or happiness on as many others as possible as well as on ourselves. By gradually refining our desires and making them less and less applicable to purely material and worldly ends, we can thus make ourselves more and more unselfish in the only way I can construe the term; for by so doing we shall be utilising our desires for more and more worth-while aims, and for the benefit of increasing numbers of people.

That is the spirit in which I view my Nature Cure work. It is useless for me to deny that I derive great pleasure (and indeed happiness) from it. The fact that it brings great benefit to many sick people makes it all the more pleasurable to me to think I earn my livelihood through such a worthy and worth-while medium. But the basic fact is that it provides me with a very great deal of personal satisfaction, and I doubt whether I should be at all keen on carrying on with it if that satisfaction was not present. Fortunately, life provides us with maximum pleasure and satisfaction for the things that are most worth-while, so the seeming paradox is resolved without difficulty. That which is most worth doing is that which helps humanity most; and it is also that which provides the doer with the greatest possible personal satisfaction in its performance.

Thus life has taught me that the way to abolish selfishness is to strive to make our desires as worthy as we can make them, and as applicable to a wide circle of fellow human beings as to ourselves. Thus our personal selfishness is lost in the degree of assistance we provide through it to others.

Therefore, the more we lose ourselves in our thoughts and endeavours for others, the more is our personal selfishness swallowed up and ennobled by what we are doing. I regard this as one of the most important lessons life has taught me, for it enables me to reconcile my innate selfishness with the good of my fellows. Surely this is something of really great worth to the self in its desire for growth and expansion?

Life has also taught me that we must always have objectives to strive for that are a little beyond our reach. If we should succeed in grasping them eventually, then we must immediately place other objectives before us which are still ahead of us. Only in this way can we grow mentally and spiritually, in exactly the same way as the tiny baby grows physically through stretching out to grasp things just beyond its reach. Its little body is developed in that way, and only in that way can we grown-ups also develop our mental and spiritual muscles too. I have also learnt from life that if one has set objectives before one that seem difficult of attainment, it is surprising how we unconsciously develop the powers to grapple with them. The need (or the urge) calls forth the ability or aptitude, just exactly as in the case of the growing body of the young baby. The urge or desire *must come first*; then the aptitude or ability naturally follows. This is surely knowledge of first-rate importance to us? For it shows us that the power to achieve is provided us in exact proportion to our desire to achieve. This does not mean mere day-dreaming or "wishful thinking," but real, earnest desire that springs from the core of one's being.

Another thing life has taught me is the supreme value of reading, for through books we can contact the greatest minds of the race, both ancient and modern. It has also taught me to take real pleasure in the objects Nature provides for our senses, such as the sight and smell of flowers, the song of the birds, the sunshine, the blue sky, the grass, the smell of rain on wet earth, the tang of burning leaves, the freshness of the wind and the crispness of frost.

These are everyday things, but if we learn really to appreciate them we find ourselves getting closer and closer in spirit and harmony to Nature herself, and to sentient life in general. In the hurly-burly of present-day living most people tend to ignore these simple, natural sights and sounds, and look for pleasure and satisfaction from more sophisticated things. By so doing they lose a very great deal indeed of the true happiness of living, believe me.

Life has also taught me that deceit and lies do no good to the one who perpetrates them. One may succeed for a while through such agencies (as also through stealing, etc.), but in the end one finds that honesty is in truth the best policy. For if we treat other people fairly, then we tend to get treated fairly in return, and *vice versa*. Thus, even from the point of view of personal expediency, it is worth while to be as honest as possible in our dealings with our fellows; it pays the best dividends in the end. There are times when it is difficult to be completely honest, just as there are times when it is difficult to be completely truthful. One may cause more harm to others by being always one hundred per cent truthful than is really necessary if one wishes to live as harmoniously as possible with one's fellow men and women; and the same with honesty. I admire the man who can be one hundred per cent honest in everything; but I feel that about ninety-nine per cent honesty is sufficient for me when we consider the times in which we live, governmental interference with personal affairs, etc. I would never dream of intentionally doing anyone out of a penny, but who can say with complete truth they have never broken any law or regulation, and always delivered unto Cæsar that which is supposed to be due to him?

Life has also taught me to respect people for what they are, not for what they are supposed to be. If we try to be genuine ourselves, we can soon detect whether or not others are being genuine too. It has been my attitude to try to meet people on the ground of their own innate selfhood—i.e., that



which makes them what they are—rather than on the ground of what they assume themselves to be or would like to be. It makes for genuineness all round, and I feel that we cannot have too much of that in the world these days. It is not always easy (or even possible) to be true to this ideal, but if one tries to be true to it in one's dealings with one's fellows, it is surprising how much difference it makes to social and business contacts.

Of course where friendship is concerned it is only on this basis of mutual regard and esteem for what the other person is that real and enduring friendships can develop at all (with all that it means to the individual concerned). It is quite impossible to be friends with anyone on an artificial basis, however much we can do this with mere acquaintances, and the only way to avoid artificiality is by being *oneself* all the time, and allowing the other person to be likewise. It is very difficult to be so with some people, I know, in which case one must never try to be real friends with them; that is all.

Life has also taught me the supreme value of a home and happy home life, and the enormous importance of peace and quietude for the rest, recuperation and development of the mind and soul. Life has taught me, too, that in marriage one achieves a unique relationship, one capable of having the most profound effect on one's whole development as a human being. Our parents and brothers and sisters are provided for us without conscious choice on our part; but husband or wife is something quite different. Here choice is the whole essence of the matter, and woe betide him or her who chooses wrongly! But what happiness for those who choose rightly! The joys of parenthood are not mine, nor did I ever imagine they would be; but life has taught me that with all forms of happiness go commensurate responsibilities, and parenthood obviously is an outstanding example of this.

This question of responsibility is one that is germane to all life and living, for we must needs accept the responsibility for everything that we do, and be willing to accept increasing

responsibility as we move up life's ladder. Indeed, I would say that one of the outstanding lessons life has taught me is to accept responsibility not only for everything that I do or that happens to me, but also for *myself* too. I am responsible for myself to the Creative Source that made me, and I can only discharge that responsibility satisfactorily by striving to make myself as fitting an instrument for the expression of that Creative Life Essence through me as I can, through my work and aspirations.

Thus I achieve creative self-expression for myself and at the same time further *Its* urge for ever fuller creation in and through me—and also give thanks in the only manner possible for the supreme gift of *life itself*, which *It* has bestowed on me. Here lies the whole essence of creative living. Some may achieve it through home and family (as in the case of the average woman); some through work on the land, or crafts of various kinds; some through genuine artistic and creative achievements as writers, painters, sculptors, etc.; some through travel and adventure; some through legislation or other responsible work for their fellows; and so on.

This is indeed the whole crux of the problem of successful living, and life has taught me such success has nothing to do with £ s. d., although in the world as at present constituted it is impossible to live without money of any kind. One must have enough to live fairly decently, with all immediate wants capable of satisfaction; but to live to pile up money, or achieve worldly fame, is to prostitute whatever creative gifts one may have, and thus frustrate the real creative urge implanted in one by the Source of All Life.

I am now getting rather into the realm of metaphysics, which is only right where basic issues in living are concerned, but I do not wish to delve any further into this subject here. I have dealt with it from various angles in other of my books, and that must suffice.

In conclusion, life has taught me that without real love and affection one can never really live at all in this world.

Living is just a mockery in that case. This makes it all the more important to treasure these gifts when they are bestowed on us by other human beings, and should make us try our utmost to give them to others less fortunately placed, so far as this is possible. Those who give us love and affection do not do so in order to get us to give them back *to them* in return—although we naturally tend to do this; they are given to us freely and because of the wish to do so. Thus we can only attempt to pay for this most precious of life's bequests by giving them to others less well endowed in these respects than ourselves.

This is the whole essence of human kindliness and sympathy, and life has taught me that without such things the world would be a very poor place indeed. The Universe having been founded on love (in its highest form of a free bestowal of all the supreme gifts that life can bring to us, without any desire for reward on the part of the giver), it is only right that we human beings should try to do likewise in our small way, in our contacts with our fellows, to help in some tiny measure to repay this most priceless of boons.

*Thus has life taught me*, and I sincerely hope that what I have had to say in these pages will prove of some interest and benefit to all who read them.

THE END